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Towards an Ethics of Intersubjectivity: Affective Textures of Empathy in Modern Arabic and Hebrew Literature and Film

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Towards an Ethics of Intersubjectivity: Affective Textures of Empathy in Modern Arabic and Hebrew Literature and Film

by

Rachel Elizabeth Green

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In memory of my grandfather

Martin Siegel, (1927-2016), z"l

Who read every thesis until this one;
Who would see novel connections and elegant solutions
everywhere he laid his eyes;
Whose example taught us the art of pushing the envelope,
and whose love convinced us we were seaworthy vessels.

Here we go.

לזכר מיין זיידן

מארטין (מנחם-מענדל) סיגעל (1927 — 2016), ז"ל

וואס ער האט געלייענט יעדן טעזיס אחוץ דעם איצטיקן;
וואס ער האט געכאפט נייע פארבינדונגען און עלעגאנטע באשיידן
וווּ נאר ער האט א קוק געטאן;
וואס ער האט אונדז געדינט ווי א מוסטער ווי מע לערנט זיך אויס די קונסט פון אריבערגיין די אנגענומענע ראמען,
און וועמענס ליבשאפט האט אונדז אלעמען איבערצייגט, אז מיר זענען שיפן וואס טויגן צו שווימען איפן וואסער.

געגאנגען !

(Many thanks to Itzik Gottesman for the Yiddish translation)

Towards an Ethics of Intersubjectivity: Affective Textures of Empathy in Modern Arabic and Hebrew Literature and Film

by

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Comparative scholarship of Israeli and Palestinian literatures has posited various forms of a relational literary space, often predicated on implicit hopes for empathy. While not disavowing these hopes, per se, this dissertation takes empathy itself as a starting point for a critical appraisal of the ethics and aesthetics of intersubjectivity. Analyzing Hebrew and Arabic literary and cinematic works from both within and beyond the geographical/epistemological spaces of the Arab-Israeli conflict, this dissertation is positioned at the intersection of comparative readings of Hebrew and Arabic, on one hand, and Empathy Studies on the other. Works considered include Ḥanān al-Shaykh's *Story of Zahra* and Hūdā Barakāt's *Disciples of Passion* (Lebanon), Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī's *The Bleeding of the Stone* (Libya), Saʻūd al-Sanʻusi's *The Bamboo Stalk* (Kuwait), Yoel Hoffmann's *The Book of Joseph* and Shira Geffen's *Self Made* (Israel), as well as as well as S Yizhar's "Khirbet Khizeh," Emīl Ḥabībī's "Pessoptimist," and Ghassān Kanafānī's "Returning to Haifa."

This dissertation first argues that the Question of Palestine, sui generis, played an outsized role in shaping the post-1948 aesthetics of empathy in Hebrew and Arabic literature and film writ large. In dialogue with the conflict, some works in Hebrew tended towards an ethic of shooting and crying *(yorim ve-bochim)*, a position of collective victimization, while some in Arabic tended towards an ethics of commitment *(iltizām)* and resistance (*muqāwama*), or an externalization of aggression in the belief that action would lead to resolution. Such an understanding gestures towards the related yet divergent

histories of emotion of Zionism and Arab Nationalism, respectively. However, it also renders visible the myriad ways in which subsequent authors and filmmakers in both linguistic spheres have come to resist the proscription of empathy by reclaiming the intersubjective.

While the Middle East has long factored as a site of extreme conflict in the Metropolitan imagination, Empathy Studies as a field has paid surprisingly scant attention to the region's cultural production. By reading three distinct affective textures of intersubjectivity, including frightful, chastened, and ambivalent, this dissertation seeks to move the field of Empathy Studies beyond binaries of pro-empathy and anti-empathy, opening it up to considering the many affective textures of the intersubjective. Such an opening further informs and is informed by developments in the post-Arab Spring (post-2011) cultural spheres in Israel and the Arabic-speaking world that have rejected the ideological and emotional binaries of an earlier generation.

Towards an Ethics of Intersubjectivity: Affective Textures of Empathy in Modern Arabic and Hebrew Literature and Film

Introduction

Statement and Structure of the Argument

In conversation with comparative scholarship of Hebrew and Arabic literatures on the one hand, and the field of Empathy Studies on the other, this dissertation considers the aesthetics and ethics of intersubjectivity in literary and cinematic works in Hebrew and Arabic from 1948 through the present. Some of the extant comparative scholarship of Hebrew and Arabic has tended to compare Israeli and Palestinian literatures in terms of a relational space predicated on implicit hopes for empathy. While not disavowing these hopes, this dissertation seeks to expand the scope of the comparative act to delineate some of the aesthetic and ethical contours of the affects of empathy, writ large within literary and cinematic spaces, both within and beyond the spaces of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In so doing, it crafts a two-part argument.

First, it stages an intervention in literary history, zooming out to the regional level to argue that empathy in Hebrew and Arabic since 1948 is intimately tied up with the Question of Palestine, whether the empathy in question relates directly to the conflict or not. By putting into dialogue the well-known concepts of crying and shooting (*yorim ve-bochim*) [Hebrew], on the one hand, which is a position of victimization that nevertheless betrays a deep sense of guilt, and commitment (*iltizām*) and resistance (*muqāwama*) [Arabic] on the other, which are an externalization of aggression for the sake of aspirations both political and philosophical/existential, it suggests that the two languages conceived of empathy in somewhat divergent terms. This fault line in turn roughly corresponds to a problematic of a global economy of empathy and outrage, where the privileged demand the

former while everyone else experiences the latter. This conception of empathy is not new; the intervention occurs in *conceiving* of Hebrew and Arabic literature in such terms. This aspect of the argument is the foundation. It is constructed primarily in the latter part of the introduction via both literary and non-literary sources; it is what renders empathy in Hebrew and Arabic intelligible to work in Empathy Studies, which to date has been primarily concerned with Anglophone works. In some instances, reading the affects of empathy in and across non-metropolitan languages such as Hebrew and Arabic introduces an intersemiotic component of translation between divergent systems of signs and ideologies[1] not necessarily present in monolingual Anglophone readings and comparisons. In other instances, however, the affects of empathy look quite similar in the Anglophone and non-Anglophone spheres. Even within such instances, however, the expansion beyond the Anglophone must be accompanied by a critical look at the history of Orientalism and the cultural politics of affect. Such a look reveals that some non-English languages, such as Hebrew, have been read in Western, and especially American popular culture as particularly capable of generating empathy, while others, such as Arabic, have been cast as proponents of what Maha al-Nasser critically refers to as a "culture of death." The comparative, cross-linguistic analysis of the affects of empathy in literature cannot proceed without addressing this Orientalizing, racist history, even if the dynamics and literary devices at play ultimately have much in common.

And second, having established the Hebrew and Arabic literary and cinematic landscapes as a component of a larger critical discourse of empathy, this dissertation seeks

[1] Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti, 3rd ed (London ; New York: Routledge, 2012), 126–32.

in turn to take up the call of scholars of philosophy and literature such as Joshua Landy to move the field beyond questions of pro-empathy and anti-empathy, or the search for the myriad shortcomings of empathy expressed within the literary text. This dissertation thus articulates three different affective textures of the literary and cinematic engagement with the intersubjective in a selection of literary and filmic works in Hebrew and Arabic from Lebanon, Israel, Libya and Kuwait produced between 1989-2012: frightful, chastened, and ambivalent. These textures are not exhaustive, but serve rather as a starting point for the articulation of an ethics and aesthetics that dwells in the *tension* between empathy's promise and its limits/shortcomings. Thus, the pairings in this dissertation have been selected on the basis of aesthetic continuities rather than empirical intersections; in so doing, they in turn inform and are informed by developments in the post-2011 cultural spheres in Israel and in the Arabic-speaking world, whereby a younger cohort of authors and filmmakers, empowered and emboldened by the ubiquity and information and the leveling of traditional hierarchies, have sought to upend the ideological and emotional trends of their forebears.

The following is thus divided into six sections: Working Definitions; Primary Theoretical Lenses; Interlocutors I: Empathy Studies, World Literature and the Specter of Orientalism; Interlocutors II: Empathic Affect, Middle Eastern Literature and the Theoretical Imperative; Establishing Divergent Aesthetics of Empathy in *Yorim ve-Bochim* and *Iltizām/Adab al-muqāwama*; and Innovations and Chapter Breakdown.

Working Definitions

Ethics and Aesthetics

While the definitions of ethics and aesthetics are merely framing devices for broader arguments and are not the central concern of this work, for the sake of clarity it is important to specify that the ethics and aesthetics herein refer to the space of conjunction and overlap where Ethics of Emmanuel Levinas enter into conversation with the aesthetics of Hans-Georg Gadamer.

The American Heritage dictionary defines ethics as "a set of principles of right conduct," or "a theory or a system of moral values."[2] The philosophical conceptions of ethics that most intuitively accord with the project at hand are the dialogic ethics of Emmanuel Levinas, whereby absolute responsibility for the *other* is the foundational tenet of philosophy; for Levinas, the *other* stakes an ethical claim by virtue of his absolute vulnerability. Particularly compelling is Adam Newton's Levinasian-inspired *Narrative Ethics* in which he argues that traditional moral criticism "bolsters the authoritarian character of the novel."[3] Instead, for Newton, ethics is a "binding claim exercised upon the self by a concrete and singular other whose moral appeal precedes both decision and understanding" (Newton 12). The materiality of the literary text comes to bear insofar as "certain kinds of textuality parallel this description of ethical encounter in several obvious ways, [thus implying] "a diachrony across the temporal world of the text and the real time of reading" (Newton 13). Newton not only articulates this diachrony, but beautifully and subtly alludes to it in the very critical language he employs, thus holding ethics open to

[2] Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, "The American Heritage Dictionary Entry: Ethics," accessed July 31, 2017, https://ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=ethics.
[3] Adam Zachary Newton, *Narrative Ethics* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995), 9.

what Geoffrey Galt Harpham has called "august reticence" and "principled irresolution."[4] Indeed, the theoretical approach found within the following chapters seeks not to proclaim a moral verdict from within each literary or filmic text. Rather, it endeavors to probe some of the more provocative ambiguities found within in order to bring to light interpretive *possibilities*. By considering such possibilities instead of charging the artistic work with a singular and reductive extratextual task, the analyses that follow attempt to respect the right of the literary and filmic text to provoke and to explore, rather than demanding that it contribute directly and immediately to the resolution of concrete social ills. Similarly, in the spirit of Harpham's "august reticence," this does not mean that the interpretations are unconcerned with the extratextual. To the contrary, each of the authors and directors discussed in this work have elsewhere articulated their political beliefs and in some cases, activist agendas, in a most visible manner. However, in order to respect the *literary*, according to Harpham it is the role of the critic to adopt something of the language of the literary text itself rather than that of the political pamphlet.

Aesthetics as a field, on the other hand, refers to questions concerning taste in art. It first came to the fore during the 18th century as part of a larger backlash against the ascendancy of rationalism, seeking to maintain the beautiful as a sphere beyond reason's reach. Taste, the forebear of the modern "aesthetic," which David Hume considered an innate, sixth sense for perceiving beauty, was thought to bypasses rational faculties. While reason may be necessary to perceive the nature or structure of beauty, the *perception* of beauty, according to proponents of what came to be known as the *immediacy thesis*, was an

[4] Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *Getting It Right: Language, Literature, and Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

innate, indeed "internal," non-rational endeavor. The other major issue in aesthetics, across all of the aforementioned central questions, is the extent to which taking pleasure in art is or is not related to the viewer's own interests, be they political, economic, social or otherwise; this was known as the disinterest thesis. Theories of aesthetics typically consider the immediacy and/or disinterest thesis in light of one of a series of questions, including the nature of the artistic object; the nature of the evaluation of art and its value; and/or the nature of the experience of art.[5]

The project at hand is most concerned with questions of the nature of aesthetic experience; indeed, this is a field of inquiry that seems to anticipate the phenomenological aesthetics of Hans-Georg Gadamer. For Gadamer there exists a continuity between the artistic work and the lived-in world. Interpretation thus completes the work of art, but necessarily as a function of this underlying continuity. As he argues, "We sublate the discontinuous punctuality of experience in the continuity of our existence."[6] In other words, experience and existence are not coterminous. Experience, whether our own or that of another, acquired through viewing, hearing or reading the work of art, is bounded in space and time, yet is ultimately assimilated into continuous existing. By this logic, the aesthetics of intersubjectivity within the literary are at once textual and extra-textual; they comprise an experience bounded in place and time, yet they nevertheless reach beyond the page, whether subtly or vociferously, into the continuity of existence beyond.

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[5] This definition-paragraph draws on James Shelley, "The Concept of the Aesthetic," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2015 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2015), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2015/entries/aesthetic-concept/.

[6] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. William Glen-Doepel (London: Sheed and Ward, 1979), 86.

Empathy and Intersubjectivity

Before proceeding to discuss the work of literary scholars concerned with empathy, for the sake of clarity let us define the core terms *empathy* and *intersubjectivity*. In the context of European philosophy, empathy and intersubjectivity were at first understood as more or less coterminous. A primary category in Phenomenology, *intersubjectivity* refers to a state of affective sharing between two separate, sentient beings. Developed within the context of German Romanticism, Theodore Lipps' aesthetics, the term to the best of my current knowledge is closely aligned with the German *einfuhlung*, precursor of the English *empathy*[7]. *Einfuhlung* originally pointed to an affective way of grappling with "the problem of other minds," or how humans ascertain knowledge of the thoughts and feelings of others, a concern which has been a core concern of philosophy since the time of Descartes. Insofar as Lipps' expanded notion of *einfuhlung* also paved the way for the phenomenology and intersubjectivity of Henri Bergson, Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, it was already controversial when it fell out of fashion with Heidegger's pledge of allegiance to Nazi ideology. Samuel Moyn notes that Heidegger's students Hannah Arendt and Karl Lowith, in particular, found the concept "defective" insofar as it was unable to establish a secular basis for morality.[8] For these reasons, among others, philosophy, or at least

[7] Empathy was first coined by Robert Vischer in 1873 as the German *einfuhlung,* literally "feeling into." Theodor Lipps expanded Vischer's notion of *einfuhlung,* transforming it from an action via which one appreciates art and nature, to a "central category of philosophy," a sense phenomenon that enables the subject to ascertain the mindedness of others. With Lipps' expanded concept of *einfuhlung* in mind, Psychologist Edward Tichener translated the term to English via Greek in 1909, coining the English word *empathy* for the first time. *See* Karsten Stueber, "Empathy," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2014, plato.stanford.edu/entries/empathy.

[8] Moyn devotes his second chapter, "The Controversy Over Intersubjectivity," to the divergent positions Heidegger's students held on intersubjectivity, namely on Heidegger's *mitsen*, or "co-being." *See* Samuel Moyn, *Origins of the Other: Emmanuel Levinas between Revelation and Ethics* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2005), 57–87.

analytic philosophy, has largely eschewed the twin notions of empathy and intersubjectivity, leaving psychology, and more recently, neuroscience, including research on mirror neurons and the shared manifold of intersubjectivity,[9] as the primary site of investigation of these concepts from the 1950s onwards. Literary scholars, as well, have taken quite an interest in these concepts in recent years, although before considering such scholarship, it behooves us to consider definitions of empathy from the field of psychology; indeed, much literary scholarship on empathy seems to devote itself to the revelation of the distinctions between these various definitions.

While considerations of empathy and intersubjectivity from the social sciences may seem too overdetermined for use in literary analysis, I find the work of social psychologist Daniel Batson, well known for his empirical work on the *empathy-altruism hypothesis*,[10] particularly productive on account of its precision. Of Batson's typology of eight types of empathy, [11] it seems to me that the types most akin to the *intersubjectivity* as understood in Phenomenology are "emotional contagion" (affective sharing with no distinction between self and other) and "empathic concern" (affective sharing with a cognitive distinction between self and other).

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[9] *See* Massimo Ammaniti and Vittorio Gallese, *The Birth of Intersubjectivity: Psychodynamics, Neurobiology, and the Self*, First edition, The Norton Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology (New York, NY: W.W Norton & Company, 2014); Vittorio Gallese and Hannah Wojciehowski, "How Stories Make Us Feel: Toward an Embodied Narratology," *California Italian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2011), https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3jg726c2; Vittorio Gallese, "Journal of Consciousness Studies," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 8, no. 5–7 (2001): 33–50; Gregory Hickok, *The Myth of Mirror Neurons: The Real Neuroscience of Communication and Cognition*, First edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014); Jaime A. Pineda, ed., *Mirror Neuron Systems: The Role of Mirroring Processes in Social Cognition*, Contemporary Neuroscience (New York: Humana, 2009).

[10] Batson's empathy-altruism hypothesis is that feelings of empathy can and do lead to altruistic, prosocial behavior. *See* C. Daniel Batson, *The Altruism Question: Toward a Social Psychological Answer* (Hillsdale, N.J: L. Erlbaum, 1991); C. Daniel Batson, *Altruism in Humans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[11] *See* Daniel Batson, "These Things Called Empathy: Eight Related but Distinct Phenomena," in *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy*, ed. Jean Decety and William John Ickes (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2009), 3–15.

I bring up Batson's typology to adapt it for literary scholarship in two ways. First, as a tool of the social sciences, Batson's framework does not readily allow for articulating the various types of ambivalent states that dwell between the two aforementioned empathies (i.e. between empathic concern, and emotional contagion). And, second and more significantly, it fails to address the nature of the artistic exploration of the seeming *absence* of empathy. While neuroscientists, psychologists and philosophers recognize empathy as a simultaneously 'affective and cognitive structure of feeling,' there is little agreement to what extent empathic capacities factor day-to-day as an organizing element of lived experience. Traditional, Freudian psychoanalysis emphasizes the centrality of the aggressive drives.[12] The object relations branch of psychoanalysis, on the other hand, posits that it is relationships with others that form the basis of self-understanding; its prioritization of sociality and transferential relationships are in turn corroborated by evolutionary biologists[13] and neuroscientists.[14] The literary text, however, unlike the psychological experiment, can function as a site for an aesthetic exploration of humanity's *wavering faith* in its empirically proven yet seemingly underutilized empathic capacities.

Primary Theoretical Lenses

Empathy and intersubjectivity in this project are a site for the meeting of the theoretical fields of Affect Theory and Trauma Theory. Trauma Theory grounds lived experience in historical circumstance, often the circumstances of a collective. Yet, as Stef

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[12] Sigmund Freud and James Strachey, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Standard ed (New York: Norton, 1977).
[13] F. B. M. de Waal, *The Age of Empathy: Nature's Lessons for a Kinder Society*, 1st ed (New York: Harmony Books, 2009).
[14] Ammaniti and Gallese, *The Birth of Intersubjectivity*.

Craps notes, in order to fulfill its aspirations, it is necessary that Trauma Theory "keep the empathy loop open [so that] the empathy it promotes [can] extend to the sufferings of those belonging to non-Western or minority groups."[15] As I argue here, Affect Theory provides the conceptual framework not only for the extension of empathy, but also the leveling of the hierarchies of bodies implicit in understandings of history that privilege certain traumas over others, in turn inadvertently 'rendering some lives more grievable than others,' to use borrow Judith Butler's turn of phrase.[16] Affect theory in turn, especially as developed by Sara Ahmed in the sphere of public emotions, provides for the leveling of the hierarchies of bodies. For in Ahmed's terminology, as shall be discussed shortly, all bodies, regardless of group affiliation or status, are equally capable of affecting and being affected. In this way, Affect Theory provides the language for keeping open Craps' proverbial empathy loop, while Trauma Theory, in turn, brings history and memory to Affect, Theory which as a field stands to pay more attention to the historically-informed nature of certain types of affect, especially as relates to cultural memory.[17]

Affect Theory

From among the many branches of Affect Theory,[18] it is the affirmative turn of Sara Ahmed's work that most closely aligns with the goals here. For Ahmed, affect entails being *affected,* meaning affected by *something* -- such as another body or an object. She takes the

[15] Stef Craps, "On Not Closing the Loop: Empathy, Ethics and Transcultural Witnessing," in *The Postcolonial World*, ed. Jyotsna G. Singh and David D. Kim (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 57.
[16] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?*, Reprint edition (London ; New York: Verso, 2010).
[17] In future revisions, I realize that Memory Studies, especially the work of Michael Rothberg, which I cite at some length in the body chapters, will likely need to play a more prominent role at this early juncture.
[18] Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, "An Inventory of Shimmers," in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2010), 6–8.

affects of happiness as her primary example, whereby she understands "happiness as a happening"[19] that entails being affected *by something* and to feel happiness *towards* that something. This in turn leads to judging that something to be *good* in the vein of Aristotle, John Stuart Mill, and John Locke, for whom the seeking of happiness is the highest human end. Thus Ahmed arrives at the phrase "happy objects," which according to her are objects privileged within a given affective community as sources of happiness; furthermore, happiness "sticks"[20] to these objects, as objects themselves are *sticky*. Happy objects thus *accumulate* positive affect as they circulate. Indeed, these happy objects are part of what makes the social bonds necessarily *sensational*.[21] While Ahmed doesn't explicitly suggest as such, her notion of affective communities echoes Arjun Appadurai's notion of "communities of sentiment."[22] A juxtaposition of these two overlapping concepts is productive, for it suggests that among Ahmed's happy objects are not just material goods, but also, potentially, literary and artistic creations, histories, stories and other forms of cultural memory that potentially draw communities together, or alternatively, push them apart or otherwise complicate matters.

The intersubjective seems almost mundane for Ahmed. Affects circulate constantly, at times affecting bodies, and at other times being affected by them, but the fact of

[19] Sara Ahmed, "Happy Objects," in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2010), 29.
[20] Ibid.
[21] As Ahmed notes, "Groups cohere around a shared orientation toward some things as being good, treating some things and not others as the cause of delight. [...] Happy objects are passed around, accumulating positive affective value as social goods." *See* Ibid., 35.
[22] Arjun Appadurai, "Topographies of the Self: Praise and Emotion in Hindu India," in *Language and the Politics of Emotion*, ed. Catherine A. Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod, Studies in Emotion and Social Interaction (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne and Paris: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 93–94.

circulation and of the porousness of objects and bodies to the "impingements," of affect, to use Gregg and Seigworth's term,[23] remains constant.

It is thus possible to understand Ahmed's notion of *alignment points* as an extended intersubjective state that includes multiple bodies and/or objects; blockage points, on the other hand, may be understood as the breakdown of the state of intersubjectivity due to a halt in the transfer of affect on account of affective imbalances where neither affect gives way to the other. The "best case" scenario from the perspective of a hegemonic affective community is thus the achievement of "points of alignment,"[24] where there is as little deviance as possible from the community's norms. In the case of artistic works such as film, Ahmed implies that points of alignment can also extend beyond the confines of the screen to include the viewer. In other words, Ahmed's terminology requires the doing away with the new-critical tenet of the irrelevance of reader response. For one possible, if not common scenario is "blockage points," which occur when certain bodies, such as those of "melancholy migrants," resist conversion to the hegemonic affective regime; in such instances, "reattachment to a happier object is seen as an enabling move."[25]

Trauma Theory

If affect theory implicitly accepts intersubjectivity as a prerequisite for the possibility of the transfer of affect, but in so doing neglects the role of history, the opposite might be said of trauma theory. That is, for the field of trauma theory, both history and memory are foundational. However, in its emphasis on the listening of a witness as a way

[23] Gregg and Seigworth, "An Inventory of Shimmers."
[24] Ahmed, "Happy Objects," 46.
[25] Ibid., 48.

to be freed from trauma's repeated returns, the field stands to pay more attention to affect and its intercultural, intersemiotic transfer and translation in this process of listening. Susannah Radstone aptly points out the aggressive affect that underlies listening to the trauma of another, thus excluding listener, and by extension the reader, from occupying the pain inherent in the position of victimhood.[26] However, her analysis does not address the nature of cross-cultural or intersemiotic listening. What emerges from trauma theory is thus an unfilled opening, an unfulfilled yearning for the vocabulary of affect theory and the intersubjective. Indeed, intersubjectivity and the transmission of affect (which of course, according to Ahmed, always has an *angle*) seem to be the missing theoretical pieces for which trauma theory has been searching for some time. Cathy Caruth appears to be alluding to some type of intersubjective experience, real or yearned for, in the famously resonant last sentence of her introduction to Part I of *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*: "In a catastrophic age [...] trauma may provide the very link between cultures: not as a simple understanding of the pasts of others but rather, within the traumas of contemporary history, as our ability to listen through the departures we have all taken from ourselves."[27] What are these "traumas of contemporary history," what are the affects to which they give rise? And what are these affects if not among Gregg and Seigworth's "infinitely connectable, impersonal, and contagious belongings to *this* world"?[28]

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[26] Susannah Radstone, "Affect and Theory: Undivided Worlds," in *Public Emotions*, ed. Perri 6 et al. (Basingstoke [England] ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 181–201.
[27] Cathy Caruth, "Introduction," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 11.
[28] Gregg and Seigworth, "An Inventory of Shimmers," 4. This quotation also raises the question of how or why trauma should necessarily be construed as *impersonal*. I take Gregg and Seigworth's use of the word here to allude to what I see as the inherently stoic outlook of affect theory. That is, while an affect *itself* may be impersonal, classifiable, and infinitely reproducible, this does not mean that the *object*, *event* or *body* harboring, evincing or receiving said affect is not "personal" and/or unique.

A pioneer of trauma theory, Cathy Caruth has most recently engaged in a rereading of Freud that, like the work of Kaja Silverman cited above, seeks to construe Freud as subconsciously arguing for the triumph of *eros* over *thanatos*, or the triumph of the so-called "life drive" over the well-known "death drive." In this move, Caruth is suggesting here a potential letting go of the Freudian death drive and any concomitant melancholia in favor of some type of new alignment towards happier objects. Ahmed sees the compulsion for melancholy migrants to let go to their melancholia as coercive; Caruth, however, seems to seek out a space in which such a realignment creates an opportunity for the exercise of agency.

Although she does not seem to present an *affective* understanding of this act of realignment, her "language of the life drive" can be understood as yet another call for affective sharing in the wake of trauma; for both to speak with and to listen to this language seems to require a certain willingness, indeed, initiative in the face of threatening affect. That is, this language can be read as integral to the yearned-for intersubjectivity of her earlier works; it is this language that will enable the traumas of the contemporary world to serve as a "link" (or a winding, thorny path; or an armed checkpoint etc.) between cultures. Indeed, Caruth's "language of the life drive" seeks to empower trauma survivors, themselves potential affect aliens, to bring others to conversion points and to be able to seek a new type of affective alignment in which their "histories that hurt" also have a place. Although Caruth does not seem to use the language of affect, affect can still be brought to bear to characterize the language of the life drive for which she advocates. Such analysis is possible on the personal level, and also, perhaps, as Caruth would have it, on the historical. In this way, the traumatized individual can be freed from the isolation of the individualized

therapeutic model of analysis. Indeed, it can enable both an individual and a given affective community to engage with their "histories that hurt" and the concomitant blockage points that are bequeathed from generation to generation as affective communities continue to be separated by their "bodily horizons,"[29] or horizons of "likes" (and dislikes).

Here, the attempt to read Caruth's interpretation of the "life drive" as grasping for Ahmed's terminology of affective alignments, blockages and conversions gives way to Marianne Hirsch's notion of postmemory, or the "consequence" of the recall of trauma experienced by one's parents, that is, trauma recalled "at a generational remove."[30] While Hirsch recognizes that the fragmentary experiences of trauma remain the experiences of the parents, she argues that the experiences are transmitted "so deeply and affectively so as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right. Postmemory's connection to the past is thus not actually mediated by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation [...] These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present."[31] The key word here is "affectively;" Hirsch seems to be among the first to introduce the notion of affect into trauma theory. Thus, reading Hirsh alongside affect theory in general and alongside Ahmed in particular begs the question of how new affective alignments can occur over the course of a multi-generational timespan.

However, transmissions of affect are not sufficiently problematized in Hirsch's writing. For within the privileged space of the family, memories pass simply, deeply, and affectively from one generation to the next. Yet, Hirsch also sets her sight on the potential for postmemory to function *outside* the family, indeed, outside of national or ethnic

[29] Ahmed, "Happy Objects," 32.
[30] Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 106.
[31] Ibid., 107.

boundaries. In this vein, she suggests postmemory as "an intersubjective transgenerational space of remembrance [...] retrospective witnessing by adoption [and] an ethical relation to the oppressed or persecuted other."[32] The keyword here is "intersubjective." However, in not *theorizing* the intersubjective, Hirsch has left something for future scholars to tackle.

The central issue here is Hirsch's assumption, or perhaps hope, that the same affective ties that bind child and parent, or even sympathetic "adopters by witnessing" will hold throughout, across the aforementioned lines of distinction. This, however, is not the way empathy tends to function empirically, where lines of transmission do not always pave the way for a sympathetic reception. Thus, while Hirsch's account of memory within the family and the proximate in-group across generations is on solid ground, the further away it moves from the family the more it breaks down. The result, as also noted above, is to privilege not only the content of the memories of the family and the in-group, but also to ensure that the affective passageways for transmission will move primarily in one direction: in cultivating the sympathy of the out-group for the in-group. However, Hirsch does note that additional theorizing is needed to properly account for the transfer of postmemory to (and also from) "less proximate groups" so as to avoid the appropriation of the "otherness of the other."[33] Stef Craps makes the distinction that trauma theory should take into account the "specific social and historical contexts in which trauma narratives are produced and received, and be open to attentive to the diverse strategies of representation and resistance which these contexts invite or necessitate."[34]

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[32] Marianne Hirsch, "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photography and the Work of Postmemory," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 14, no. 1 (2001): 9–10.
[33] Ibid., 11.
[34] Stef Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma out of Bounds* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 43.

Interlocutors I: Empathy Studies, World Literature and the Specter of Orientalism

In the last ten years, the study of empathy has migrated from the social sciences to literary studies as a tool for probing claims about the value and function of literature, especially in liberal democracies such as the U.S. and U.K. Recent publications in the loosely defined field of "empathy studies" have focused on English and Anglophone literatures in particular, exploring everything from forms of strategic empathy operating within and beyond the text, to the intertwined histories of empathy and Modernism, to critiques of the packaging of otherness.[35] These works have emerged out of an understanding of literature as antidote to the socially denaturing forces of industrialization and globalization,[36] on the one hand, and as a "curriculum for world citizenship" on the other.[37]

In the English and Anglophone literary spheres, empathy first gained currency with the rise of sentimentalism in the 18th century as both a response to Enlightenment empiricism and to the sudden drawing near of distant others. Whether distant colonized

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[35] Recent publications include Hammond, *Empathy and the Psychology of Literary Modernism*; Meghan Marie Hammond and Sue J. Kim, *Rethinking Empathy through Literature*, 1st edition (New York: Routledge, 2014); Alexa Weik von Mossner, *Cosmopolitan Minds: Literature, Emotion, and the Transnational Imagination*, Cognitive Approaches to Literature and Culture Series (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014); David Palumbo-Liu, *The Deliverance of Others: Reading Literature in a Global Age* (Durham ; London: Duke University Press, 2012); Blakey Vermeule, *Why Do We Care About Literary Characters?* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); Suzanne Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); María Pía Lara, *Narrating Evil: A Postmetaphysical Theory of Reflective Judgment*, New Directions in Critical Theory (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

[36] For example, Suzanne Keen suggests the rise of the novel as a response to the anomie felt by new arrivals in English industrial centers, thrust from the intimacy of the country to the crushing anonymity of city life. *See* Keen, *Empathy and the Novel*, 132–133. *See also* Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*, 1st paper-bound ed (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965); Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989). Watt and Taylor both suggest, not unproblematically, that the novel served as handmaiden to the development of democracy in Europe.

[37] Martha Craven Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997), 86–89.

peoples or the all-too-near urban underclasses powering the factories of the industrial revolution, the sentimental literary text became a way to make sense of the ethical aspects of the encounter with otherness.[38] Writing about the popularity of sentimental literature in 18th-century Britain and France, Lynn Festa suggests that the inward turn of the sentimental aesthetic provided metropolitan readers with a way to cope with the ethical implications of colonial expansion. By creating structures of feeling that organized the "circulation of affect via feeling subjects and objects,"[39] reading publics could make sense of disorienting encounters with distant others, empathically recognizing the shared humanity of all while simultaneously drawing boundaries between insiders and outsiders. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) is believed to have helped pave the way for the abolition of slavery in antebellum America, and Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1838) is seen as having contributed to increasing protections for the poor in Victorian England.[40] Yet, Festa argues, sentimental literature ironically serves to entrench boundaries, "exclud[ing] sentimental objects: the poor, the wretched, the old, and the enslaved, from the community of feeling subjects."[41] In other words, part of the ethics of feeling with suffering others was license to slam shut the gates.

Writing of the present day, Lauren Berlant identifies empathy and empathy studies as a space for considering the ethics of privilege, or how the holding and withholding of

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[38] Mark Phillips, *Society and Sentiment : Genres of Historical Writing in Britain, 1740-1820* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=74920&site=ehost-live; Suzanne Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[39] Lynn M. Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 2.

[40] *See* Kathleen Woodward, "Calculating Compassion," in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, ed. Lauren Berlant (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), 60; Newton, *Narrative Ethics*, 9.

[41] Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France*, 11.

compassion are "two sides of a bargain that the subjects of modernity have struck with structural inequality."[42] And viewed in this light, it is not surprising that many contemporary academic works analyzing empathy in both sentimental and realist genres,[43] even works advancing a critical perspective, are unable to extricate themselves from such structures of affective inclusion and exclusion, between members of metropolitan reading publics (the "we" who read and feel) and their empathized-with outsiders (the "they" about whom "we" read).[44] One striking example is the work of David Palumbo-Liu's *The Deliverance of Others*; although Palumbo-Liu writes convincingly of the limits of empathy and "deliverance" in contemporary realist Anglophone literature, he nevertheless writes in the first person, referring on almost every page to the "we" or the "us" of the Euro-American center, assuming a single identity and positionality for his readers seeking to feel with others, who are thus by definition "distant." Aamir Mufti has convincingly written of the same problematic in the broader terms of the discourse of World Literature, noting that the subject-agent discovering new words through reading is always assumed to be Euro-American.[45] In both instances, the language employed to describe a de-centralized, equitable circulation, whether of knowledge or of affect, becomes moored in the very fixedness it seeks to disrupt.

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[42] Lauren Berlant, "Introduction," in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, Essays from the English Institute (Routledge, 2004), 10.

[43] Empathy has been explored most commonly by sentimental and realist texts. Considering the novel in 19th century France, Margaret Cohen argues that despite generic continuity between realism and sentimentalism, *sentimental* was more frequently reserved as a descriptor for texts written by women. She in turn suggests the term "sentimental social novel," particularly for the work of George Sand. *See* Margaret Cohen, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1999).

[44] *See* David Palumbo-Liu, *The Deliverance of Others: Reading Literature in a Global Age* (Durham ; London: Duke University Press, 2012), 1–26.

[45] Aamir Mufti, *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), xi.

As Carolyn Pedwell notes, "empathy" is a highly contested term, "constructed and employed differently" and towards distinct aims in different cultural and political contexts as it circulates (x). Simply put, empathy performs different work in multicultural and non-multicultural literary spaces. Indeed, Rebecca Bryant writes trenchantly of the dangers of viewing Lebanon and other post-Ottoman spaces through the lens of multiculturalism, nothing that the problems of majority, minority and difference are a function of the Enlightenment and do not accurately capture the dynamics of Ottoman customs and laws, or their lasting legacies in contemporary societies, where "everyday coexistence [...] is a labor of peace that relies on a constructive ambiguity of the boundaries of belonging."

Thus I see a primary shortcoming of some these works the fact that given their focus on English and Anglophone literature, they fail to articulate the possibilities for empathy and the transfer/blockage of affect *between* linguistic and cultural spheres possessing their own distinct affective configurations. In other words, they leave little room for considering the intersemiotic aspects of empathy, to borrow Anton Shammas' and Roman Jakobson's terminology, nor do they consider that empathy may simply function differently under distinct historical and cultural conditions.[46]

Indeed, theorists of translation and World Literature such as Pascale Casanova and Susan Bassnett frame the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural consumption of texts as a

[46] On the intersemiotic and translation, *see* Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti, 3rd ed (London ; New York: Routledge, 2012), 126–32. At the 2016 MLA meeting, Anton Shammas suggested that the translation of Palestinian human rights testimonies into Hebrew, and via Hebrew to English, stripped said testimonies of some of their agency and protest.

similar antidote on a more complex, global scale.[47] In other words, the argument goes, by reading about the lives of others and of "other others," authors and readers can strive together towards a liberal ideal of feeling with said others**.** By now such assumptions are commonplace in the genre of writing that seeks to defend the value of the Liberal Arts.[48]

However, these idealistic, humanist arguments have also drawn extensive criticism. For example, Emily Apter writes of the untranslatable as an obstacle to the unproblematized flows of Casanova's world literary system.[49] In a not dissimilar vein, David Palumbo-Liu argues that literary works, a seemingly uncomplicated "delivery system" for otherness, "become less and less stable as they interact with, and try to accommodate, a more radical type of otherness" as produced in post-colonial and globalizing contexts and as experienced in both real and "virtual" proximity.[50] The common thrust of these critiques is that notions of World Literature and of 'reading as antidote,' must be adapted to accommodate more radical forms of otherness, which, I argue, are themselves accompanied by a proliferation of Apter's untranslatables. While the aforementioned *einfuhlung* is among the entries in the *Dictionary of Untranslatables* which Apter edited, a more complete definition would necessarily frame this German term

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[47] Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, Convergences (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004); Susan Bassnett, *Translation*, The New Critical Idiom (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2014).

[48] This debate has taken on a scientific turn as of late, with researchers attempting to quantify the benefit of reading literary fiction. *See* Pam Belluck, "For Better Social Skills, Scientists Recommend a Little Chekhov," *New York Times*, accessed December 9, 2015, http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/10/03/i-know-how-youre-feeling-i-read-chekhov/.

[49] Emily S. Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (London ; New York: Verso, 2013); Barbara Cassin, Steven Rendall, and Emily S. Apter, eds., *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, Translation, Transnation (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

[50] Palumbo-Liu, *The Deliverance of Others*, 1.

alongside and in conversation with related concepts from other philosophical and literary traditions.

Yet, even before any challenges of translation, establishing a place for in the critical discourse on empathy not only for texts that problematize empathy, but for *Arabic* texts that problematize empathy, is a crucial step if the discourse empathy is to aspire to be truly comparative; however, in order to do so, it must grapple with the legacy of Orientalism. Indeed, Palestinian, and by extension Arab cultures writ large, have been viewed in the United States in light of what Asma Al-Naser refers to as the "cultural turn in imperial racism."[51] Al-Naser traces the representation of the Palestinian *fidā'ī* (freedom fighter, *lit.* one who sacrifices himself, especially for his country[52]) in the American cultural imaginary in order to demonstrate that Palestinian culture, via imaginary links to Nazism and actual links to other anti-colonial struggles, came to be understood as a "culture of death," as opposed to the supposed Zionist "culture of life." Al-Naser demonstrates that this supposed "culture of death" came to be understood, especially in the years of the suicide bombings of the Second Intifada (2000-2005), as a culture "with one foot in the reckless Middle Ages and another in the anti-Modern and transnational underworld of the guerillas" (66) that promotes "a general disregard for human life, [both] that of the bomber and that of the targeted civilians." (65) Crucially, Al-Naser draws out a "more subtle" assumption that is crucial for reading a place for Arabic literature in empathy studies:

> Furthermore, this perspective also implies a more subtle assumption that Oriental culture is somehow actually organized around death, that it makes sense of otherwise political, social or historical situations *through* recourse to death. And, of course, **that in civilized Western cultures --**

[51] Asma Al-Naser, "Beyond Redemption: Postwar America and the Question of Palestine" (PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2013), 67.
[52] Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic: (Arabic-English)*, ed. J. Milton Cowan, 4th ed (Ithaca, N.Y: Spoken Language Services, 1994), 821.

> **and this includes Israel, more imaginative space is granted to life and its pleasures.**" [bold added] (66-67)

Here Al-Naser identifies the problematic of the perceived lacunae in the development of the imagination in "Oriental imaginative spaces," including literature. However, by reckoning with the crucial role of linguistic positionality vis-a-vis global flows of affect and capital, Empathy Studies can help complicate cross-cultural and cross-linguistic crossings of memory.[53]

Interlocutors II: Empathic Affect, Middle Eastern Literature and the Theoretical Imperative

I argue in this dissertation that it is imperative to theorize Hebrew and Arabic literatures within the context of a Middle Eastern literary system precisely because of how this system, given its past liturgical functions and present affective crossings, simultaneously strives for *and* problematizes empathy. For in addition to their twin liturgical histories, both have also come of age in the context of modern nationalism, Zionism and Arab Nationalism, respectively. Each of these ideologies in turn placed limits on the range of permissible emotions; in their respective heydays, these movements left little room for an *other* without, much less for any type of ambivalence within.[54] What makes the Middle Eastern literary system so intriguing, then, is how these literatures have

[53] On the possibilities of the transfer/sharing of memory between groups, *see* Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory"; Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2009).

[54] Hanna Samir Kassab, *The Power of Emotion in Politics, Philosophy, and Ideology* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 78–79.

negotiated the demands of nationalist solidarity on the one hand, and the impulse towards vulnerability and re-enchantment on the other. The Middle Eastern case is also compelling insofar as the cultural history of empathy and the intersubjective in the Modern Middle East has yet to be written; part of this dissertation is an attempt to outline such a history.

While I consider my primary theoretical interlocutors to be in affect and empathy studies, my research is also in conversation with the sub-field of comparative readings of Arabic and Hebrew. This area that has developed over the last twenty years and in that time has developed a variety of complementary perspectives. It also builds upon the so-called "Middle Eastern turn"[55] in Jewish studies more broadly. However, my project is also different from and complementary to this sub-field in that it seeks to understand Hebrew and Arabic literature not solely in terms of comparisons with empirical justification, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the recuperation of an Arab-Jewish past, or the encouraging of a Mizrahi-Palestinian conversation. While each of these inquiries is important in its own right, my project is different in that it seeks to read Hebrew and Arabic in light of a shared history of modernization that includes attempts to negotiate intersubjectivity and violence in the face of the disenchanted modern. To this end, I seek to read Hebrew literature in light of a larger contemporary history of intergroup relations in the Middle East and thus necessarily brings a broader, more representative range of Arabic and Hebrew literary texts into conversation with one another, including texts by Ashkenazi authors in Hebrew, and non-Palestinian authors in Arabic. I argue that such a reading

[55] Ammiel Alcalay 's paradigm-shifting *After Jews and Arabs* sets the stage for reading overlapping, symbiotic literary histories of Hebrew and Arabic from the Islamic Golden Age to the present. Similarly, Orit Bashkin writes of a "Middle Eastern turn" in historiographical studies of Jewish communities of the Middle East; however, I have yet to see the term used in the field of *literature*. *See* Orit Bashkin, "The Middle Eastern Shift and Provincializing Zionism," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46 (2014): 577–80.

enables the urgent theoretical step of locating openings that gesture towards the *other* but simultaneously extend beyond.

Four prominent works of this field are Rachel Feldhay-Brenner's *Inextricably Bonded*[56], Gil Hochberg's *In Spite of Partition,*[57] Anna Bernhard's *Rhetorics of Belonging: Nation, Narration and Israel/Palestine,* [58] and Lital Levy's *Poetic Trespass;*[59] my work builds upon and differs significantly from each.

Hochberg's work is concerned with Levantinism as an alternative paradigm via which Hebrew, Arab and Francophone authors conceive of the relationship between the signifiers *Arab* and *Jew* (3) beyond the dictates of normative Zionist ideology. My primary critique of Hochberg's work relates to her fifth chapter in which she reads Mahmoud Darwish's *Memory for Forgetfulness* and Amin Maalouf's *Ports of Call* as invitations to "imagine a future made of love - the kind that transgresses even the finest discriminations" (137). While her close readings are convincing, given its implications for her larger project, it is also misleading or at least incomplete insofar as it gives short shrift to violence and to the failure(s) of the fantasy of empathy. Anna Bernard, on the other hand argues for "a dialectical understanding of the changing relationship between the two national formations over time, as opposed to the more familiar insistence in metropolitan popular media and

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[56] Rachel Feldhay Brenner, *Inextricably Bonded: Israeli, Arab, and Jewish Writers Re-Visioning Culture*, Studies on Israel (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003).
[57] Gil Z. Hochberg, *In Spite of Partition: Jews, Arabs, and the Limits of Separatist Imagination*, Translation/transnation (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), http://www.UTXA.eblib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=557148.
[58] Anna Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging: Nation, Narration, and Israel/Palestine* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).
[59] Lital Levy, *Poetic Trespass: Writing Between Hebrew and Arabic in Israel/Palestine* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014).

culture on a static dialogism or 'balance."[60] While her basis for comparison is compelling, her work begs the question of why to draw the boundaries of the national solely at the borders of Palestinian literature when the dynamics in question span a much wider geographical berth.

Lital Levy's *Poetic Tresspass* stages a number of crucial interventions that build on prior moves to read Hebrew in its Middle Eastern context. By reclaiming the internal Arab voices and Arabic echoes in Modern Hebrew literature as penned by both Palestinians and Arab Jews, Levy articulates the concept of "hyper-language," which she defines as

> [A]n aesthetic hyperawareness of the writing language in relation to its dialectical Other, while gesturing toward Benjamin's 'pure language' -- the essential part of meaning that resists expression in words. Literary language of this type of highly performative, calling attention to itself and potentiating the thematic level of the text with another layer of meaning to tell a second story.[61]

By tackling such a significant aspect of lived linguistic experience in Israel/Palestine, Levy foregrounds the affective transfers and blockages inherent in any circulation of empathy; thus, the book builds a strong foundation for future comparative readings of Hebrew and Arabic literature beyond the boundaries of the Green Line.

Of all the studies reading Hebrew and Arabic literature comparatively, this project is most inspired by an indebted to Rachel Feldhay-Brenner's two monographs, *Inextricably Bonded* and *The Ethics of Witnessing*[62] that analyze literary texts in terms of intergroup trauma and its working through. In her first book, Feldhay-Brenner juxtaposes Hebrew-language works by Jewish and Arab authors, suggesting Hebrew literature as a place of

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[60] Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging*, 13.
[61] Levy, *Poetic Trespass*, 12.
[62] In this work Brenner, considers the modernist Polish Skamandar group and their diary entries documenting the deportation of the Jews in the same penstroke as Daniel Batson's aforementioned typology of empathy. *See* Rachel Feldhay Brenner, *The Ethics of Witnessing: The Holocaust in Polish Writers' Diaries from Warsaw, 1939-1945*, Cultural Expressions of World War II (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2014), 16.

"dialogic interaction between victors and victims," rich with subversive potential for "reciprocal recognition."[63] While this dissertation shares Feldhay-Brenner's thematic concerns, it also expands upon her project. One significant shortcoming of Feldhay-Brenner's first book is her exclusive reliance on texts either originally written in Hebrew, or on texts in (and therefore selected for) Hebrew translation. In this way I believe her work fails to grasp a poetics of the empathy specific to the Arabic-language works of Palestinian authors she reads, much less a poetics of empathy specific to Arabic-language texts beyond the geographic boundaries of Israel/Palestine.

Yet, moving forward, in conversation with but also alongside Feldhay-Brenner, Hochberg, Bernard and Levy, this dissertation embodies an approach that shifts from an understanding of literature as space of historically compelling "reciprocal recognition" to an understanding of literature as space of Deleuzian, unverifiable and thus ever present *possibility* of reciprocity. By broadening the linguistic scope of Feldhay-Brenner's comparative readings predicated on the affects of empathy.

Establishing Divergent Aesthetics of Empathy in Yorim be-Bochim and Iltizām/Adab al-muqāwama

As scholars from many fields have noted, Israeli literature and society are shaped by collective memory of Jewish victimization in Europe, which connects dots from the Crusades through the Holocaust. Contemporary Israeli economic and military power has

[63] Rachel Feldhay Brenner, *Inextricably Bonded: Israeli, Arab, and Jewish Writers Re-Visioning Culture*, Studies on Israel (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 13.

done little to change the national narrative, and arguably, little to change how most Israelis see themselves.

In this vein, the Israeli notion of "crying and shooting" (*yorim ve-bochim*) refers to the "conflicted emotions of the Israeli soldiers [who were] killing, it was said, but with great remorse."[64] The term first came into use during the first Lebanon War (1982-1985),[65] although as Karen Grumberg notes, the idea was present as early as the 1948.[66] It refers critically to the notion of a soldier whose strong sense of morality causes him to feel conflicted at orders to shoot, but who ultimately follows those orders despite any internal hesitation and misgiving. As Psychologist Alon Gratch explains, "[T]he phrase, like the phenomenon it captures, is a poignant rendition not only of a moral conflict but also of a deeper problem: because his present aggression rests on a historical foundation of victimization, the aggressor is unable to experience himself as such."[67] Thus, part of the shooting and crying ethos is feeling that one's positionality is more informed by a past history of victimization than by a present of military strength. While shooting and crying can be employed cynically, Gratch argues that the underlying causes stem from a real psychological phenomenon in Israeli society, not only consistent with "aggressor seeking to

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[64] Alon Gratch, *The Israeli Mind: How the Israeli National Character Shapes Our World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015), 147–48.

[65] Israeli forces entered the Lebanese Civil War in 1982 on the side of the Maronite militias. Although they withdrew in 1985, they continued to occupy a strip of Lebanese territory along the border with Israel until 2000.

[66] Karen Grumberg, *Place and Ideology in Contemporary Hebrew Literature*, 1st ed, Judaic Traditions in Literature, Music, and Art (Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 2011), 49, n. 13.

[67] Alon Gratch, *The Israeli Mind: How the Israeli National Character Shapes Our World* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015), 148. Gratch is an Israeli-born, Columbia University educated clinical psychologist living and working in New York; the title of his book is ironic insofar as it evokes the controversial 1983 book by Raphael Patai, *The Arab Mind*.

justify his actions," but that also "represents the aggressor's underlying sense of helplessness."[68]

Shooting and crying clearly does not and cannot account for all aesthetic engagements with empathy in modern Israeli literature and culture; indeed, empathy in Israeli literature and cinema must be considered in light of the distinction Raya Morag and others have made between "perpetrator narratives" and "victim narratives," which differ in the terms of their release: the perpetrator confesses, but the victim testifies. [69] The Hebrew texts considered in this dissertation, as well as the Arabic ones, span a range of relationalities vis-a-vis perpetrator-hood and victimhood, at times confounding the two. This is especially acute in the Israeli case, where canonical texts considering the Holocaust exist side-by-side with texts considering the Nakba and the ongoing dispossession of the Palestinians. Take, for example, how certain elements of the Israeli critical apparatus have fixated on Palmach-generation author S. Yizhar as an empathic bridge to the Arab world,[70] some even suggesting Yizhar's protagonist in his 1949 novella, *Khirbet Khizeh* as a type of "hero that exculpates the group"[71] in the eyes of Yizhar's supposed Arab readers.[72]

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[68] Gratch, *The Israeli Mind*, 148.

[69] Raya Morag, *Defeated Masculinity: Post-Traumatic Cinema in the Aftermath of War* (Bruxelles ; New York: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2009), 4–5. I thank Nitzan Tal for bringing my attention to this citation and look forward to reading her forthcoming dissertation.

[70] For examples of this type of discourse, see Brenner, *Inextricably Bonded*, 153–58; Anita Shapira, "Hirbet Hizah: Between Remembrance and Forgetting," *Jewish Social Studies*, New Series, 7, no. 1 (October 1, 2000): 23; S. Yizhar, *Khirbet Khizeh*, trans. N. R. M. De Lange and Yaacob Dweck (Jerusalem, Israel: Ibis Editions, 2008), especially the front inner fold of the book jacket; Yair Auron, *Ha-Sho'a, Ha-Teḳuma Ṿeha-Nakba*, Sidra Le-Ḥeḳer Yiśra'el, Ḥevrah, Tarbut Ṿe-Histṭoryah (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2013); Ghānim Maz'al, *al-Shakhṣīya al-'Arabīya fī al-adab al-'Ibrī al-ḥadīth*, al-Ṭab'a 1 ('Akkā: Dār al-Aswār, 1985), 153–70; Ahmad H. Sa'di, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Ahmad H. Sa'di, eds., "Afterward," in *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*, Cultures of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 301–2. The work of Maz'al and Sa'di are particularly interesting as they are both Palestinians educated in Israeli schools and universities.

[71] I borrow this phrase from Hannah Wojciehowski. In the context of Petrarch's rehabilitation of the notion of friendship during the outbreak of plague in Italy in 1347-8, Wojciehowski explores the example of Petrarch's brother as such a hero. Indeed, Petrarch's brother cared for the sick, administered their last rites and buried

Empirical research, however, suggests that the reading of Yizhar's soldier-narrator as moral paragon has only been espoused by Arab scholars educated in Israeli educational institutions; readers from parts of the Arab world, not surprisingly, have by and large read *Khirbet Khizeh* as historical document and confession.[73]

The literary depiction of the Israeli experience of power vis-a-vis the occupied Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza, as informed in part by shooting and crying, as both ethics and aesthetics, thus tracks with Lauren Berlant's aforementioned contention that to feel compassion is to experience the "apex of agency." It is as if such Israeli literature is written in the vein of Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin and Charles' Dickens' Oliver Twist "instruct[ing] response by inducing identificatory states of compassion and pity."[74]

In Arabic, on the other hand, it is commitment, or *iltizām* that has played somewhat of a significant role in shaping the aesthetics of empathy in the wake of 1948; *iltizām* gave way to a related but different notion of *resistance literature*, or *adab al-muqāwama* in the wake of the *Naksa* of 1967, but as far as the aesthetics of intersubjectivity are concerned, the two concepts form somewhat of a continuum.[75] As M. M. Badawi explains, commitment, or *iltizām*, first gained prominence in the Arab world in the 1950s as a turning towards the

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the corpses of those who succumbed at a time when most people avoided the sick, dying and dead, even among their own families. Petrarch's brother's example helped reaffirm belief in the transcendental nature of humanity's best qualities at a time when empirical realities suggested otherwise. *See* Dolora C. Wojciehowski, "Francis Petrarch: First Modern Friend," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 47, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 269–98.

[72] For a review of Arabic-language criticism of Yizhar, see Rachel Levine Green, "The Souls of Khirbet Khiz'ah Speak: Arabic-Language Criticism of S Yizhar" (BA Thesis, University of Chicago, 2008).

[73] Ibid.

[74] Newton, *Narrative Ethics*, 9.

[75] Situating *Adab al-muqāwama* and *yorim ve-bochim* within the context of empathy studies is the subject of my first post-dissertation article. On resistance literature, as opposed to committed literature, *see* Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987).

enlistment of literature in an emancipatory political struggle; it was championed by authors who sought to rebel against literary Romanticism, embracing in its stead a poetics of social realism and protest.[76] Although it was a rough translation of Sartrean, existentialist commitment, it came to mean many things, including the taking of existentialist or Marxist political positions.[77] However, whatever form it took, *iltizām* "always denoted a degree of nationalism, Arab or otherwise."[78]

Many academic works on empathy consider literary writings, usually in a major metropolitan language, that somehow complicate assumptions about the link between empathy and prosociality; the Arabic literature of commitment shares in this aesthetic. On the one hand is the Brechtian alienation effect[79] that seeks to dissociate viewer-readers from their emotions. On the other hand, for example, are literary works that also seek to critique empathy by giving voice to the oppressed, generating not only sentiment but also outrage, like Brecht from the lexical space of major languages, but from a position of disenfranchisement rather than privilege. As Kathleen Woodward explains, such a dynamic is at play in the marginalized spaces of the American literary landscape, such as in Harriet Jacob's unflinching, anti-sentimental rewriting of Uncle Tom's Cabin from the perspective

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[76] M. M. Badawi, "Commitment in Contemporary Arabic Literature," *Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale. Journal of World History. Cuadernos de Historia Mundial.* 14, no. 1 (1972): 54–61.

[77] It was Jurji Tarabishi who produced the fateful translation of Sartre, and thus *commitment*, into Arabic. *See* Yoav Di-Capua, "Arab Existentialism: An Invisible Chapter in the Intellectual History of Decolonization," *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 4 (October 1, 2012): 1061–91, doi:10.1093/ahr/117.4.1061.

[78] Badawi, "Commitment in Contemporary Arabic Literature," 14.

[79] As Douglas Robinson explores in depth, Bertolt Brecht is well known for employing an alienation affect (*verfremdung*) that sought to distance audiences from their emotions in order to bring about Marxist social action firmly based in reason. Similarly, as Deborah Nelson writes, Hannah Arendt maintained a cool, dispassionate tone in her 1963 *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, believing that pity for Eichmann's victims would compromise the self-command and powers of reason required to soberly face the extent of moral breakdown in Germany. *See* Douglas Robinson, *Estrangement and the Somatics of Literature: Tolstoy, Shklovsky, Brecht*, Parallax (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Deborah Nelson and Lauren Berlant, "Suffering and Thinking: The Scandal of Tone in Eichmann in Jerusalem," in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), 219–44.

of those such as the shackled mother, forever bereaved as she faces her child on the auction block, crying not for empathy, but for justice.[80] I argue that these cold shivers of outrage and disbelief also contribute to the affective texture to varying degrees in the Arabic literature of commitment and resistance.

One text that can be read in the context of Woodward's shivers of outrage is Emile Habibi's the Pessoptimist, which has been a perennial choice for critics searching for hints of hopeful openings for empathy in Israeli-Arab writing. However, such a lens precludes attention to the biting critique of Israeli-Palestinian power relations therein.[81] In one such passage, Thurayya ʿabd al-Qādir Makūl is a Palestinian refugee. She returns to her home in Lydda after twenty years in Amman, looking to regain possession of vessels containing gold jewelry she had hidden before fleeing the oncoming Jewish army in 1948. Miraculously, the Israeli authorities assist her, and the successful recovery leads to rejoicing shared between Arabs and Jews alike who hug each other, embrace, and celebrate. Journalists write feel-good articles, and "kindergarten teachers [tell] their children how the Israeli police search for treasures hidden by lonely Arab mothers bereaved of their sons, just as they look for lost Jewish children, and are so vigilant that they never sleep."[82] It is truly a moment of brotherhood and compassion, and a moment that briefly reflects the Israeli self-conception as possessing a morally elevated national character on account of a history of persecution. The fantasy is cut short, however, when the Israeli authorities, instead of handing Thurayya

[80] Woodward, "Calculating Compassion," 69.
[81] *See* Rachel Feldhay Brenner, "'Hidden Transcripts' Made Public: Israeli Arab Fiction and Its Reception," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 1 (Autumn 1999): 93; Hannan Hever, *Producing the Modern Hebrew Canon: Nation Building and Minority Discourse*, New Perspectives on Jewish Studies (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 213; Levy, *Poetic Trespass*, 128, n. 82.
[82] Imīl Ḥabībī, *The Secret Life of Saeed: The Pessoptimist*, trans. Trevor Le Gassick, Emerging Voices (Brooklyn, N.Y: Interlink Books, 2002), 94.

her gold, hand over a receipt for absentee property. The impoverished, forlorn Thurayya will be able to retrieve her gold one distant day when a grand settlement is reached between Israel and the Arab states. In the meantime, she is to return across the Jordan river to "eat mud in the Widhat refugee camp and to ask God to give long life to her kinsmen and their cousins."[83] Thurayya is thus thrust from the political bacchanalia of a feel-good news story to the harsh reality of the poorly paved, economically depressed camp. Thurayya's disappointment, indeed, her second dispossession at the hands of a false or incomplete empathy, stands as a warning to any study of empathy in Hebrew and Middle Eastern literature that might limit itself to a celebratory poetics of "seeing the self in the other."

Furthermore, *Khirbet Khizeh* is not the only Middle Eastern work thematizing empathy that limns the affective limits of empathy in translation across lines of sentiment and cultural memory. Indeed, similar dynamics can be identified in the circulation of many Arabic language authors into Hebrew and beyond, including Palestinian author Ghassan Kanafani and Syrian playwright Saadallah Wannous.

In Ghassan Kanafani's novella, *Returning to Haifa* (1970),[84] a Palestinian couple, Sa'id an Safiyya, is forced to leave their home in Haifa during 1948; they leave not only their home, but also, inadvertently and tragically, their newborn son, Khaldun. They live as refugees in the West Bank for twenty years, and when Israel conquers the territory in 1967 and opens the borders, the couple decides to return to their home in Haifa; the equally if

[83] Ibid., 95.
[84] Ghassān Kanafānī, *ʻĀʼid Ilá Ḥayfā* (Bayrūt: Dār al-ʻAwdah, 1970); Ghassān Kanafānī, "Returning to Haifa," in *Palestine's Children: Returning to Haifa & Other Stories*, trans. Barbara Harlow and Karen E. Riley, New ed. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 99–138.

not more pressing goal, unspoken yet mutually understood, is to see their long lost son. What they find is a Jewish Holocaust survivor, Miriam, who has raised the son as an Israeli named Dov, and a scarcely recognizable young man, confident in his Jewish identity, Zionist zeal and Israeli military fatigues. The original novella ends with the Palestinian father, Sa'id, proclaiming that this young man, Dov, may one day meet his biological younger brother, Khaled, on the battlefield. While at the outset of their journey, Sa'id had forbidden Khaled from joining the Palestinian resistance, after beholding Dov's transformation he secretly wishes that Khaled will have defied him to join in his absence. While the novella depicts Miriam as sensitive to the suffering of the Palestinian children in wartime Haifa on account of her own encounters with Nazi brutality, including the gunning down of her younger brother, the text is nevertheless one that balances a humane depiction of Miriam alongside a stark appraisal of the imperative to resist. Yet, as Adia Mendelsohn-Maoz suggests, in its translation and reception in/to Hebrew, the novella was altered and adapted significantly, first as a novel by Sami Michael, and then as a play by Boaz Gaon, in order to fit the worldview of the Israeli public, informed by Israeli cultural memory rather than Palestinian.[85]

On a similar note, seemingly inspired by Frantz Fanon's chapters in *Wretched of the Earth* on the mental illnesses incubated within the colonial project, among them the guilt of the French torturers that ultimately manifested itself as sexual dysfunction,[86] Syrian

[85] Adia Mendelsohn-Maoz, *Multiculturalism in Israel: Literary Perspectives* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2014), 46–53.
[86] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox, 1st ed (New York: Grove Press : Distributed by Publishers GroupWest, 2004), 181–234.

Playwright Saadallah Wannous composed a bombshell of a play. *al-Ightiṣāb (The Rape)*,[87] published in 1990, stages the mental breakdown of an Israeli Mossad agent who is unable to continue torturing Palestinian dissidents. In a dramatization of the conception of the conquest of Palestine as a rape, one of the tools in the agent's horrific toolbox is systematic rape. When, like Fanon's torturer, the agent finds he is unable to perform sexually with his wife, he seeks the assistance of a psychiatrist. The psychiatrist ultimately leads him to understand that his impotence is a function of repressed guilt. By disavowing Zionism he is able to psychically heal, although he is summarily murdered by his superiors. His wife, who shares in his revelation and disavowal, however, manages to emigrate to America to begin life anew. For Syrian audiences, the play was provocative, not only in breaking the taboo of humanizing the Israeli enemy, but more significantly, as I argue here, because it offered a vivid depiction of ideological transformation, or, as Sara Ahmed would have it, affective conversion. The stakes could not have been higher in the autocratic Syria of Hafez al-Asad; the play was denied permission for official viewings, and could only performed off-stage, in the context of a dress rehearsal. Yet, as Friederike Pannewick notes, the play was received in seemingly opposite ways by Palestinian critics, who felt that the play did too much to humanize its Israeli characters, and German critics, who felt that the play encapsulated a biased, pro-Palestinian politics. He sums the play's circulation up thusly: "We thus have a situation where different publics perceive and criticize diametrically opposed tendencies

[87] Sa'd Allāh Wannūs, *Al-Ightiṣāb: Masraḥīyah*, al-Ṭab'ah 1 (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ādāb, 1990).

within the play. The fierce reactions allow us to deduce that the author has gotten to the heart of the matter."[88]

Innovations and Chapter Breakdown

Now that some Hebrew and Arabic texts have been yoked to the binaries of empathy studies, it is time to deconstruct. The body chapters of the dissertation aim towards a novel approach to empathy in Hebrew and Arabic. First, the texts read here are not typically read, or at least have not yet been read in terms of a Hebrew-Arabic comparison. Second, by considering the literary and cinematic crafting of the *texture* of the intersubjective, these chapters attempt to articulate the contours of a phenomenological experience as opposed to "unproblematically translat[ing] literary discourse into ethical discourse."[89]

Chapter 1, entitled "Violence and Frightful Intersubjectivity in Ḥanān al-Shaykh's *Story of Zahra (Ḥikāyat Zahra)* and Hūdā Barakāt's *Disciples of Passion (ahl al-Hawā)*" takes empathy and the intersubjective as a counterintuitive approach to two novels of the non-multicultural space of the Lebanese Civil War. Such an approach reveals a common aesthetic thread of frightful intersubjectivity in both works as the texture of feeling with others right on the precipice of the breakdown of the human, and thus on the precipice of the breakdown of the intersubjective matrix as such. It further suggests that empathy in these texts gestures towards an ethics of literary empathy in non-multicultural spaces, where group affiliation is not only conspicuously absent, but also actively disavowed.

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[88] Friederike Pannewick, "Hisorical Memory in Times of Decline: Saadallah Wannous and Rereading History," in *Arabic Literature: Postmodern Perspectives*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Andreas Pflitsch, and Barbara Winckler (London: Saqi, 2010), 101–2.
[89] Newton, *Narrative Ethics*, 9.

Chapter 2, entitled "Chastened Intersubjectivity and the Intergroup Poetics of Affective Porousness/Impermeability in Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī's *Nazīf al-Ḥajar (The Bleeding of the Stone)* and Yoel Hoffmann's *Sefer Yosef (The Book of Joseph),*"considers childhood wonder as a tool for interrogating the affective interplay between sensitive, porous protagonists and violent, impervious antagonists in the face of the destruction of ecosystems both human and natural. I argue that the tension between the two lends expression to a "chastened" intersubjectivity with ethnolinguistic others and with the natural world.

Chapter 3, entitled "Filiation as Promise and Peril: Ambivalent Intersubjectivity in Shira Geffen's *Self Made (Boreg)* and Saʻūd al-Sanʻusi's *The Bamboo Stalk* (*Sāq al-Bambū*)," considers the Levinasian notion of filiation alongside Derrida's paradox of hospitality in order to articulate the ambivalences born of the threat or fact of intercorporeal exchange.

Chapter One:
Violence and Frightful Intersubjectivity in Ḥanān al-Shaykh's *Story of Zahra (Ḥikāyat Zahra)* and Hūdā Barakāt's *Disciples of Passion (ahl al-Hawā)*

> "A page for you and a page for him -- what do you think? The killer and the killed in conversation"
> "But I wasn't killed."
> "You represent the dead," he said.
> "The dead don't talk and they don't have representatives," I said.
> "Aren't you a Palestinian like them? Look at Israel; it represents the victims of the Holocaust."
> "That's the difference, I said." I don't believe that victims have representatives, that they... that they... "
> "You understand nothing."
> I told him his project didn't make sense, that you couldn't sit the victim down next to the perpetrator. "Your book will be as banal as its title." Then I burst out laughing.
> - Dr. Khalil, in Elias Khoury's *Gate of the Sun* (*Bab al-Shams*)[90]

Establishing a Comparative Framework

Contextualizing Barack Obama's memoir, *The Audacity of Hope*, Sociologist Carolyn Pedwell observes that " empathy has become a Euro-American obsession," valorized as a "solution to a range of social ills [...][a] component of [...] cross-cultural and transnational social justice."[91] Indeed, since the dawn of the 18th century in Britain, the literary text has served as a space for working through the ethical aspects of intergroup encounters with distant others brought near via the twin processes of industrialization and colonization. In the same vein, as Jan Assmann argues, it has contributed to the production, consolidation and integration of cultural memory/ies where divergent narratives held by disparate

[90] Ilyās Khūrī, *Gate of the Sun*, trans. Humphrey T. Davies, 1st Picador ed (New York: Picador ; distributed by Holtzbrinck Publishers, 2007), 277.
[91] Carolyn Pedwell, *The Transnational Politics of Empathy*, Thinking Gender in Transnational Times (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), ix.

readerships exist side by side.[92] However, empathy studies as a growing field of inquiry has focused first and foremost on English and Anglophone literatures, written in the context of the conflicts born of various forms of multicultural intergroup encounter. The field, like its counterpart, World Literature, is by and large colored by the ubiquitous assumption of a community of liberal-minded, metropolitan subjects, addressed in first and second person plural pronouns. In a certain vein, both Empathy Studies and World Literature seem to reify the very hierarchies they purport to overcome. But what of empathy depicted not in the face of the identitarian hierarchies of multicultural encounter, but rather, on the precipice of what Tarek el-Ariss calls the "breakdown of the human?"[93]

The extreme internecine violence of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) and the Arabic-language novels produced in its wake complicate questions of the literary aesthetics of intersubjectivity or empathy in the wake of intergroup conflict. While the delineation of the various factions of the war is itself a charged endeavor, as various scholars have noted, neither Lebanon nor other Post-Ottoman spaces are "multicultural" in the strict sense of the word. Such dynamics undergird a frightful aesthetics of empathy that seeks not to reify, but rather, to pre-empt, stigmatize and *render irrelevant* the very notion of intergroup boundaries. This chapter will thus consider two Arabic-language novels of the Lebanese Civil War: Ḥanān al-Shaykh's *Story of Zahra* (*Hikāyat Zahra*) [1980], and Hūda Barakāt's *Disciples of Passion* (*Ahl al-Hawā*) [1993]. Reading each of these two texts as crafting a

[92] Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning, and Sara B. Young (Berlin; New York: Walter De Gruyter, 2010), 109–18.

[93] Like Tarek el-Ariss, I employ this phrase to refer to the unraveling of social norms of behavior that reign during peacetime conditions of economic and political stability; however, unlike el-Ariss, my reading of this breakdown seeks to salvage a certain type of *human* interconnectedness. Our disagreement on the nature and implications of this term has been challenging and productive throughout my years in graduate school. *See* Tarek El-Ariss, "Return of the Beast: From Pre-Islamic Ode to Contemporary Novel," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 47 (2016): 62–90.

problematic of a latent, *frightful* intersubjectivity on the precipice of the breakdown of the social fabric, indeed, of the human as such, in the non-multicultural space of the Lebanese Civil War, it will argue that neither of these two texts confirms to certain assumptions about empathy as they emerge in the Anglophone sphere. For this latent empathy seeks not to bring a multicultural society and its many different forms of collective memory into what Sara Ahmed calls "affective alignment." Instead, it issues a call to action that is *amplified* by the affective dissonance born of purposefully non-identitarian traumatic memory that is strategically denied witness. Indeed, conflicting memory among divergent social groups has been "one of the foremost issues for culture in postwar Lebanon."[94] Yet, the texts considered here construct an aesthetics of intersubjectivity that serves not to reconcile conflicting cultural memories, but rather, serves to unsettle, to mourn, and most significantly, to protest the very apparatus that produced such violent and violently conflicting memory to begin with. Such a reading thus suggests the affects of empathy as a potentially crucial if not counterintuitive lens for the novels of the Lebanese Civil War, occurring not in the midst of multicultural encounter gone awry, but rather, in the face of the breakdown of long-established patterns of *komsuluk,* or the cultural conventions of neighborliness in Ottoman and post-Ottoman spaces.[95]

In this vein, it is particularly curious that the 2005 Lebanese television game show, *i'raf al-Farq wa-lā tufarriq (Know the Difference and Don't Differentiate),* attempted to

[94] Elias Khoury, "The Fourth Farhat J. Ziadeh Distinguished Lecture in Arab and Islamic Studies: The Novel, The Novelist and the Lebanese Civil War" (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civiliations, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, April 20, 2006), 5, https://nelc.washington.edu/sites/nelc/files/documents/events/2006lebanon-eliaskhoury.pdf.
[95] Rebecca Bryant, "Introduction: Everyday Coexistence in the Post-Ottoman Space," in *Post-Ottoman Coexistence: Sharing Space in the Shadow of Conflict*, ed. Rebecca Bryant, Space and Place (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2016), 14–15.

recast Lebanese sectarianism as a form of pluralism (*ta'addud)* by having teams representative of Lebanon's sectarian makeup compete against one another in answering historical questions about each sect's historical role in building the Lebanese nation.[96] While it might make for interesting television, such endeavors to recast Lebanese society as multicultural may serve to reinforce and reify formerly porous intergroup boundaries. Echoing Festa and Berlant, Bryant warns, "the moral values of tolerance and cosmopolitanism work to disguise power."[97]

For Elias Khoury, memory has been "one of the foremost issues for culture in postwar Lebanon,"[98] in part because the war "found all of its protagonists defeated at the time of its formal conclusion."[99] While Maurice Halbwachs conceived of a *collective memory* as memory of a group that informs the memory of individuals,[100] Jan Assmann's model allows for fluidity between individual and group that more accurately reflects the dynamics of memory in Lebanon.[101] Assmann differentiates Halbwachs' notion of *collective memory* into *cultural* and *communicative memory*, whereby cultural memory is a "collective concept for all knowledge that directs behavior and experience [...] and one that obtains through generations in repeated societal practice and initiation,"[102] and corresponds to historical, mythical, and/or cultural time. *Communicative memory*, on the other hand, is "an

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[96] Sbaiti 2005, as cited in Sune Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon*, Cambridge Middle East Studies 34 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 21.
[97] Ibid., 6.
[98] Khoury, "The Fourth Farhat J. Ziadeh Distinguished Lecture in Arab and Islamic Studies: The Novel, The Novelist and the Lebanese Civil War," 5.
[99] Ibid., 2.
[100] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser, 1 edition (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1992).
[101] Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory."
[102] Assmann 126, as cited in Harald Welzer, "Communicative Memory," in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2010), 285.

interactive practice located within the tension between individuals' and groups' recall of the past,"[103] existing within social time, or the lifespan of an individual, and corresponding to the person as a 'social self.' Khoury thus suggests a Lebanon whose various forms of cultural memory have not yet reached consensus. However, rather than participate in the reconciliation of divergent forms of cultural memory, or expose hypocrisies of privilege, *Disciples of Passion* and *The Story of Zahra* instead privilege the experience of the individual; here, it is communicative memory that counts.

In the case of the trauma of the breakdown of the human in the context of the Lebanese Civil War, the two novels considered here construct a latent empathy that is always already disrupted, aligned with no one group's cultural memory, and in perpetual anticipation of revival. It is an empathy that rejects the very fixation on ethnolinguistic affiliation and group cultural memory that has granted empathy such discursive power in multicultural English and Anglophone literary spheres.

As the short excerpt above from Khoury's *Gate of the Sun* suggests, there exists within some Arabic-language literary production resulting from the Lebanese Civil War a powerful current of resistance against the valorization sentiment, and against the entrenchment of group boundaries via the overdetermined imposition of cultural memory upon the communicative. It is a rejection of the tyranny of the collective upon the individual and an implicit rejection of the inclusions and exclusions wrought by the pull of affective ties to a collective. In the excerpt, Dr. Khalil shuts down a publisher who would have Khalil participate in an interview project as a Palestinian representative of Palestinian victims in the context of the war. However, Khalil rejects such logic in the strongest of

[103] Ibid.

terms. Insofar as the proposed interview project attempts to bring together "killer" and "killed," generalizing the respective statuses of perpetrator and victim along identitarian lines, Khalil does not even grace his interlocutor with an argument. Instead, he performs his disdain for such categorization with a biting aesthetic criticism and a haughty, dismissive laugh: "Your book will be as banal as its title [...] Then I burst out laughing." In this way, Khoury's Khalil, as synecdoche for a broader literary and philosophical trend, refuses to be drafted into the publisher's affective formula, whereby the working through of disparate cultural memories will restore a rent social fabric. He can speak only for himself and possesses only his own communicative memory.

In the same vein, both Hanan al-Shaykh's *The Story of Zahra* (*Hikāyat Zahra*) and Hoda Barakat's *Disciples of Passion* (*Ahl al-Hawā*) were written in light of the post-1976 turn of Lebanese intellectuals from the heroic to the tragic, as authors, filmmakers and artists sought to highlight the "the shared experience of the absurdity of war" in order to resist the fragmentation of the public sphere fueled by ascendant sectarian narratives and buttressed by the localized distribution of sectarian media.[104] Each of these two works disrupts Metropolitan associations of empathy, sentiment and the ultimate identity-driven triumph and/or critique of liberalism; this move in turn adapts the current empathy paradigm for spaces of intergroup conflict governed by logics *other* than that of the Western European Enlightenment model of majority-minority relations.

[104] Haugbolle, *War and Memory in Lebanon*, 58–59.

The Affects of Empathy Meet the Breakdown of the Human: The Story of Zahra

Hanan al-Shaykh's[105] *Story of Zahra*, written in 1980 while the author was living in exile in London, traces the pre and post-war struggles of the eponymous Zahra. From a childhood spent accompanying her mother on surreptitious trips to the mother's paramour and then returning home to behold her father's fury and flying fists, to an abusive relationship that leaves her with two aborted pregnancies, Zahra is the picture of a deeply troubled young woman. Seeking a new start, she visits her expatriate uncle in Africa, hastily marries, loses her senses, and returns to Beirut as an equally troubled young divorcée; thus concludes the first section of the text. Indeed, as Elise Salem has contended, Zahra is a mirror image of the confused and troubled society that has produced her.[106] Once back in Beirut in the second part of the novel, and in a move depicted as equal parts exasperation, bravery and naiveté, Zahra initiates an amorous liaison with a sniper,[107] the figure

[105] Hanan al-Shaykh is considered one of the premier female novelists alive in the Arab world today. She was born in 1945 in Beirut to a Shi'ite Muslim family, studied at the American Girls' College in Cairo, lived in various parts of the Gulf with her husband from 1977-1985, and has been settled in London since 1982. Her published works include the following: *Faras al-Shayṭān* (*The Devil's Coach Horse*, a novel), published in 1970; *Ḥikāyat Zahra* (*The Story of Zahra*, a novel), published in 1980; *Wardat al-saḥrā'* (*Desert Flower*, short stories), published in 1982; *Misk al-ghazal* (*Women of Sand and Myrrh*, a novel), published in 1986; *Barīd Bayrut* (*Beirut Blues*, a novel), published in 1992; *Aknus al-shams 'an al-suṭūḥ* (*I Sweep the Sun off Rooftops*, short stories), published in 1994; *Innhā Landan, yā 'azīzī* (*Only in London*), published in 2001; *Imra 'atān 'ala shāṭ' al-baḥr* (*Two Women on the Seashore*), published in 2003; *Ḥikāyatī sharḥ yaṭūl* (*The Locust and the Bird*), published in 2005; and *'Adhāra Landanistān* (*Virgins of Londonistan*, a novel), published in 2015. *See* Raḍwá 'Āshūr et al., eds., *Arab Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide, 1873-1999* (Cairo ; New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 494–95; mlynxqualey, "Hanan Al-Shaykh's 'Azara Londonistan': Bemused, Iconoclastic, Often Hilarious," *Arabic Literature (in English)*, December 28, 2014, https://arablit.org/2014/12/28/hanan-al-shaykhs-azara-londonistan-bemused-iconoclastic-often-hilarious/.

[106] Elise Salem, *Constructing Lebanon: A Century of Literary Narratives* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003).

[107] Another novel to treat the theme of an affair with a sniper is *La Maîtresse du Notable* (1992) by Francophone-Lebanese author Vénus Khoury-Ghata. *See* Monika Moster-Eichlberger, "A New Trojan War? Vénus Khoury-Ghata on Sexuality and War," in *Arabic Literature: Postmodern Perspectives*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Andreas Pflitsch, and Barbara Winckler (Saint Paul, MN and London: Saqi, 2010), 476.

described by Yumna al-'Īd as the "god and symbol of the war."[108] Zahra's goal is nothing less than to revolutionize the way he, and by extension all the other combatants, see the humanity of those they would kill.

While the two parts of the novel have at times been read as a continued search for the roots of Zahra's scandalous flouting of social mores,[109] the reading I propose here is different. Without diminishing the scandalous nature of Zahra's actions in their original cultural context,[110] I argue that it is *because* of the extraordinary vulnerability and the abuse she experiences in the first half that she is able to feel so deeply with others in the second. Indeed, it is this depth of feeling, dug out with the drill bits of emotional and physical pain, that later enable her character to evoke in the second half the horizon of expectations typically associated with sentimental literature in the Metropolitan context. The porous Zahra naively but sincerely attempts to heal her own inner wounds by seeking a way to heal the wounds of the society around her. In this way Zahra is not unlike one of the protagonists of Israeli author David Grossman's *See Under: Love* (*Ayyen 'Erech Ahava*), Grandfather Anshel, who as an inmate at a Nazi death camp attempts to use storytelling to

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[108] Yumna al-'Id, "Lebanon," in *Arab Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide, 1873-1999*, ed. Raḍwá ʻĀshūr et al. (Cairo ; New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 31.

[109] Khaled Al-Masri focuses on the ways in which illicit sexual experiences serve as lasting rebellions against patriarchal structures, in turn revealing the " illusion of liberation and equality created by the city." (11) In a similar vein, Jan Tannous searches for the roots of Zahra's lifelong anxiety, the consequences of which span the first and second parts of the novel, in her early relationship with her mother. *See* Khaled Al-Masri, "Telling Stories of Pain: Women Writing Gender, Sexuality and Violence in the Novel of the Lebanese Civil War" (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 2010), 11; Jān naʻūm Ṭanūs, *Ṣūrat al-zāni wa-al-zāniyya fī al-adab al-ʻarabī al-muʻāṣir* (Bayrūt: Dar al-manhal, 2008), 282.

[110] Interestingly, Evelyne Accad suggests a parallel between what she identifies as the nihilistic misbehavior of Zahra and her brother Ahmed while their parents are away in their village: Ahmed seeks power and status by joining a militia, while Zahra's misbehavior is sexual in nature. Accad suggests, however, that the actions of both brother and sister reinforce the patriarchal structure against which they are attempting to rebel. *See* Evelyne Accad, *Sexuality and War: Literary Masks of the Middle East* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), 51–54.

"infect" the German camp commander with humanity.[111] To use Sara Ahmed's terminology, Zahra's plan (as well as Grandfather Anshel's) holds forth the tantalizing possibility that the sharing of positive affect can "convert" combatants of the war back to the happy objects of peacetime, thus bringing Lebanese society, piece-by-piece, into affective realignment.[112] Nevertheless, Zahra's efforts are met with failure as the sniper, now father to her unborn child, takes aim from above and leaves her for dead in the street. This ending has intrigued nearly every critic who has encountered the text; I will address its significance in my reading shortly.

On the other hand, *Disciples of Passion*, considered the cruelest text[113] in Hoda Barakat's already violent oeuvre,[114] comprises a claustrophobic, extremely violent and unsettling journey through a sole narrator's isolated psyche, also during the Lebanese Civil War. His is a mind that *purports* omniscience as to what others are thinking and feeling, yet

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[111] David Grossman, *See Under: Love*, trans. Betsy Rosenberg (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1989).
[112] Ahmed, "Happy Objects."
[113] El-Ariss, "Return of the Beast: From Pre-Islamic Ode to Contemporary Novel," 86.
[114] Hoda Barakat is (another) premier Female author writing in Arabic today, although she believes she is better known abroad than in the Arab world. She was born in 1952 to a Christian Maronite family in the northern Lebanese village of Bsharri, a birthplace she famously shares with Arab-American poet Jubran Khalil Jubran. She graduated from the Lebanese University with a B.A. in French language and literature in 1975. She moved to Paris to pursue doctoral work, but returned to Lebanon with the outbreak of the war. She later left Lebanon for exile in France towards the end of hostilities, remaining in Pairs ever since and raising her children there. She says she always loved the Arabic language, especially the language of the Qur'an. She married a Muslim man, converted to Islam and maintains a secular lifestyle. Her published works include the following: *Zā'irāt* (*Visitors*), published in 1985; *Ḥajr al-ḍaḥk* (*The Stone of Laughter*), published in 1990; *Ahl al-hawā* (*Disciples of Passion*), published in 1993; *Ḥārith al-miyāh* (*Tiller of Waters*), published in 1998; *Rasā'il al-gharība* (*The Stranger's Letters*), published in 2004; *Sayyidī wa-ḥabībī* (*My Master and My Beloved*), also published in 2004; and *Malkūt hādhihī al-'arḍ* (*Kingdom of This Earth*), published in 2015. She was awarded the al-Naqid prize in 1990 for *The Stone of Laughter*; the Naguib Mahfuz Medal for Literature in 2000, the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres' in 2002, and the 'Chevalier de l'Ordre du Mérite National' in 2008. Her novel *Kindgom of This Earth* was on the long list for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction in 2013. *See* 'Āshūr et al., *Arab Women Writers*, 371–72; "The Kingdom of This Earth," accessed April 11, 2017, http://www.arabicfiction.org/en/The%20Kingdom%20of%20this%20Earth; "Hoda Barakat - Arab Women Writers," accessed April 11, 2017, http://www.arabwomenwriters.com/index.php/2014-05-03-16-02-36/2014-05-03-16-27-01/hoda-barakat. Barakat shared other relevant biographical details during her stay at University of Texas at Austin in Fall, 2013.

is simultaneously constructed in the text as lacking any mooring in the world of actual human relationships. This is a frightful intersubjectivity, akin to an echo chamber, deeply unsettling and suggesting itself not as a means to the felicitous edification of liberal subjectivity, but instead, appears to be an accessory to psychosis, becoming the nauseating justification for violence and manipulation.

The intersubjective thus serves as a seemingly counterintuitive yet surprisingly robust analytical lens for reading texts of the Lebanese Civil War, including but not limited to *The Story of Zahra* and *Disciples of Passion*. By distilling the affectively feminine and considering its circulation, blockage and perversion within the literary text, this lens enables a continuum of intelligibility among aesthetic approaches to empathy that alternatively reinforce, critique, or seek to dissolve identitarian distinctions and group boundaries.

In *The Story of Zahra*, the disgraced Zahra is as a suffering, sanctified figure of whose strong ethical compass[115] the world is not worthy and who under other circumstances may have lived a dramatically different life, not unlike Dorothea of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*. Whether in Africa or in Beirut, Zahra always *feels too much*. In the earliest feminist scholarship, Zahra was simply taken to embody the eternal feminine, trying to find a sense of agency in an oppressive man's world; for these critics, empathy was an implicit component of femininity that seems to have not required further theorization.

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[115] To the best of my knowledge, the only critic to suggest that Zahra resists the ethical breakdown around her is an Israeli reviewer reading the Hebrew translation of the text. *See* Vered Li, "Maḥalat Ha-Nefesh Shel Levanon," *Ha'aretz*, February 4, 2005, http://www.haaretz.co.il/literature/1.1499092. Notably, the translation of the novel into Hebrew was carried out by Palestinian literary critic Muhammad Hamza Ghanayim who was one of the Arab critics to note that S Yizhar, discussed in the previous chapter, was among the first Hebrew author to empathize with the Arab. *See* Hanan al-Shaykh, *Ha-Sippur Shel Zahra*, trans. Muhammad Hamza Ghanayim (Andalus, 2004).

In *War's Other Voices* (1988), Miriam Cooke places Hanan al-Shaykh (but not Hoda Barakat, who had not yet published her first novel) among a group of female authors she terms the "Beirut Decentrists," who sought to remake society "around the image of a new center" that emphasized feminist consciousness, personal responsibility and a rejection of necessarily masculine cruelty (Cooke 3). Ultimately Cooke draws an exceedingly binary picture of gender in literature, and by implicit extension, of empathy: men wrote of "vagueness," whereas women were involved in the war as "conflict resolves and as mothers, both real and potential [...] develop[ing] a sense of self by ceasing to be a mirror or other to a male that the war had distanced." (166-7)

Like Cooke, Evelyne Accad offers a quaint, binary view of gender that locates the causes of the war in unbridled masculinity, traditional honor codes and the "overestimation of the penis."[116] Solutions, on the other hand, are to be found in "non-violent action" born of "femi-humanism."[117] Notably, Accad cites sections of the novel where Zahra elicits empathy, but without any overt analysis therein.[118] It thus seems to me that for both Cooke and Accad, writing before the conclusion of the war and prior to the Judith Butler-inspired reconceptualization of gender studies,[119] empathy functioned as part

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[116] Accad, *Sexuality and War*, 32.
[117] Ibid., 32–35.
[118] For example, Accad adduces Zahra's short-lived volunteering at the hospital (50), and also mentions Zahra's supposition that she might divert the sniper from his sniping (55); yet she does not comment further on either of these crucial passages.
[119] Judith Butler famously argued that binary gender distinctions (ie. male/female) elide the biological fact of gender as continuum; to make this continuum legible, she proposes considering gender as "performance" upon the surface of the body. In this way she creates discursive space for gender as fluid underneath the surface of social mores and pressures. *See* Judith Butler, "Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions," in *Gender Trouble and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 416–22; Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993), 307–20; Judith Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death*, The Wellek Library Lectures (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), http://UTXA.eblib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=908618.

and parcel of an eternal, feminine, in binary opposition to a (violent) eternal masculine, so implicit as to not warrant overt mention and so innately good as never to be questioned. However, in so doing, it seems to me that these feminist critics miss an opportunity to elucidate some positive aspects of Zahra's passivity, or, for that matter, some of the destructive potential of empathy when deployed to entrench difference and stoke hatred of outsiders.

While the prisms of empathic affect and traumatic memory possesses some extent of discursive continuity with this earlier feminist scholarship, my focus on empathy may appear particularly counterintuitive to some contemporary scholars of literature of the Lebanese Civil War. This may be in part because some contemporary scholarship is positively Deleuzian, emphasizing triangle lines of escape, whether from gender binaries or from ethnic belonging.[120] For Kifah Hannah, for example, the salient question is how generic innovation has rendered an entire spectrum of sexualities admissible, intelligible and vital to national revitalization. While she notes empathy as a productive element of Sahar Khalifeh's "relational feminism," (80) for example, she does not problematize empathy, considering the psychic breakdowns in *Disciples of Passion* in terms of the "flight from heteronormativity" (119) born of the traumas of war.[121] Ken Seigneurie coins the term "elegiac humanism" in the Lebanese literary context to describe that which "denies the comfort of identitarianism in the name of human dignity."[122] Similarly, as Yasmine

[120] See in this regard the book review from a Lebanese paper, cited in my third chapter, that managed to read Saʿūd al-Sanʿusi's *The Bamboo Stalk* as a story of the individual in crisis, with virtually no reference to group affiliation.
[121] Kifah Hanna, *Feminism and Avant-Garde Aesthetics in the Levantine Novel* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
[122] Ken Seigneurie, *Standing by the Ruins: Elegiac Humanism in Wartime and Postwar Lebanon*, 1st ed (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 20.

Khayyat argues in her comparative readings of Elias Khoury's *Yalo* and Ghada Samman's *Beirut Nightmares*, in both texts it is *oblivion* that enables legibility and survival; whereas those trapped by memory, whether individual or collective, become "cordoned off [as] rot that remains."[123] As Tarek El-Ariss notes, many a protagonist of Lebanese Civil War novels are "violent and violated (*mu'annafīn*), dehumanized by war and by tribal and sectarian belonging, and forced to inhabit spaces of *waḥsha* [wilderness] from which they raid and haunt the tribe, the sect or the nation."[124] In other words, it is by embodying violence that these protagonists are able to expose and resist the violence *inherent* in structures of inclusion and exclusion.

Such scholarship makes the violence and rebellion of the texts *legible*; yet, such an approach at times take rebellion at face value, interpreting and *championing* social atomization at one and the same time. Indeed, foregrounding a latent empathy in these texts, in a nod to Cathy Caruth's reading of a life-drive in Freud's *fort-da* game, opens up the possibility for the future revival of human connectivity.[125] In this way, empathy in *The Story of Zahra* and *Disciples of Passion*, emerge as *always already* disrupted; it is disrupted in its relational intent, and it is disrupted in its assumed gender fixedness. In its disruption is found its *latency*. Being latent, however, is not the same thing as being absent. To the contrary, the aesthetics of empathy and the question of human connectivity is paramount in both texts.

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[123] Yasmine Khayyat, "Memory Remains: Haunted by Home in Lebanese (Post)war Fiction," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 47 (2016): 61.
[124] El-Ariss, "Return of the Beast: From Pre-Islamic Ode to Contemporary Novel," 67.
[125] Cathy Caruth, *Literature in the Ashes of History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 5–16.

In peacetime the qualities of porousness are inconvenient, but in wartime, they bring Zahra, who is strangely calmed by the bombardments (107), to feel a surfeit of empathy for the refugees and blindfolded prisoners she sees from the window of her parents' apartment. Zahra wades into the deep philosophical waters of the Problem of Other Minds[126] as her porousness brings her to quietly experience empathy across sectarian lines, trying to listen to the sounds outside her apartment with the same mortal fear as the captives held in the basement across the street. She alone attempts to reason with the captors, young men whom she recognizes from her high school years (113-114), drawing not on the overt language of empathy, but rather, on recourse to custom, pleading, "'*Allāh ykhallīk [...] mish harām?*" "For God's sake [...] isn't it *haram*?"[127] *Haram* designates that which is forbidden in a religious context, as well as that which is socially unacceptable and morally reproachable; thus, Zahra, however, need not elaborate to get her point across.

Although she wishes she could do more, she does manage to finally leave her homebound stupor to volunteer at a local hospital. Fittingly, it is in this space of malady and contagion where the affective component of Zahra's empathic capacities first exhibit agency born of ethical conviction inscribed upon the body. It is Zahra's experience as a volunteer that first suggest how her affective porousness functions beyond the sphere of abusive relationships:

> I only lasted three days at the hospital. I was no use to anyone, with my constant trembling and my soul permeated with the groans of the wounded. The smell of the blood mixed with the stench of

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[126] Alec Hyslop, "Other Minds," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2016 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/other-minds/.

[127] The translation here is my own, as opposed to Peter Ford's "God's blessing on you [...] Can't you show pity?" I highlight in my translation the understated nuance of Zahra's plea. *See* Ḥanān al-Shaykh, *Ḥikāyat Zahra* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ādāb, 1998), 144; Ḥanān al-Shaykh, *The Story of Zahra*, trans. Peter Ford (London: Readers International, 1986), 114.

> excrement, the buzzing of hundreds of flies as big as birds, the laments of the relatives and parents of the wounded, all entered me **as if saturating the very plasma of my veins [*reaching me as if laden with a serum that spreads to all of my veins*]**. Those who speak of war in platitudes have never seen a war. Those who have only seen wars and hospitals in movies have seen nothing of the truth. / I wondered whether the leaders of the factions ever visited the hospitals, and if they did, even for an hour, how they could then live an ordinary day again? Could they stop themselves thinking about an amputated leg? Or an eye that had turned to liquid? Or of a severed hand lying there in resignation and helplessness? Why did none of those leaders, as they stood listening to the groans, pledge to put a stop to the war and cry out, 'This war shall end! I shall finish it! No cause can be won until the war is stopped. No cause comes before the cause of humanity and safety. The war ends here and now!' (115) **(Bold added; alternate translation mine)**

In the hospital, Zahra's senses of smell, hearing, and sight are overcome to the extent that neural mirror mechanisms imbricate Zahra in a domino effect of bodies breaking down; it is as *if* her own leg is being amputated, curtailing her locomotion; it is as *if* her eyes have melted, plunging her into a damp and sticky darkness; the severed hand is at once her hand, a synecdoche for the *waḥsha* her femininity strives to resist. Notably, in the original Arabic,[128] Zahra likens the auditory of the hospital something loaded or laden with a serum (*mu'abbā' bi-maṣl*) that affects her like an injection; in her affective porousness, thus is her experience of other bodies in pain. Shortly thereafter, the problem of other minds continue to weigh on Zahra as she imagines what it must be like to be among the families being forcibly relocated; she berates herself for not having taken any of them in to her parents' vacant apartment.[129]

Shaken but emboldened, Zahra turns her sights towards the sniper wreaking havoc on her neighborhood, first considering violent action, but ultimately hatching a very different "strange idea" (134): to divert him from sniping not with violence, but with seduction. At first she wonders if she will actually able to save anyone by enticing, or perhaps, converting him to look at her "as a man would look at a woman in peacetime,"

[128] al-Shaykh, *Ḥikāyat Zahra*, 145.
[129] al-Shaykh, *The Story of Zahra*, 124.

(136), or if their encounters have only "replaced his siestas." (137) Over time, however, she triumphantly beholds small signs of his apparent softening -- he gives her a ring, he speaks her name (129). When she reveals that she is pregnant, he says he will marry her (178). In touching her stomach and revealing his hopes for the unborn child, he seems to forge a connection with Zahra and with the future imbued with a hope that *almost* belies his dreadful occupation: "I hope, God willing, that you will be born to be a fighter, surrounded by the noise of rockets and bazookas." (179)

Buoyed by what seems to be a blessedly double answer to the war and to her own troubled romantic past, Zahra imagines on her way home that their wedding will cause the end of all sniping, and perhaps even of the war. In other words, she imagines that her efforts to single-handedly alter the affective alignment of the society around her, her attempts to be an affect alien who strives for a greater social good, have triumphed:

> I reach the street. It seems as if the war has suddenly come to a stop with his promise that we will marry. Everything seems normal. Has he announced our forthcoming marriage telepathically to all forces to make them stop their shooting and bombardments? / The night is beautiful and I am late. The air is neither hot nor cold, although a few light drops of rain have begun to fall. How wonderful it would be to wake in the morning and hear the news that the war has finished. Can he be a sniper? I must leave all my anxiety and questioning behind. Once we are married he will, if he is a sniper, **ask to be moved to some other duty [release himself from the assignment]**. Or will he continue to tell me lies? Where will we live? [...] Why haven't we discussed such details? We'll speak of them tomorrow. I try to run. I try to skip on air.[130] **(Bold added; alternate translation mine)**

Here, Zahra is finally engulfed in the positive affect for which she has searched since the outbreak of the war. Indeed, her happiness seems to "stick" to everything around her, from the night, which is now "beautiful," to the air that now appears buoyant. The notion of a "telepathic" announcement of marriage also suggests a hope for a newfound openness in the affective ether; that is, whereas Zahra herself was unable to convince the hostage-

[130] Ibid., 181.

takers at the restaurant to release their captives, perhaps the telepathic power of the marriage announcement will overcome all blockage points. Furthermore, in the original Arabic Zahra hopes that once they marry, the sniper will "yuʻfī nafsahu min hādhihī al-mahamma," literally, 'release himself from this assignment,' with the term "release" having connotations of forgiveness and pardon. In the resolution of the war, both Zahra and the sniper will be rehabilitated and pardoned.

Zahra's empathic qualities, nurtured by her affective porousness, stand to her merit and render her ultimate downfall a shameful act on account of which all of society must repent and reform.[131] Indeed, no one comes to her aid after the sniper's bullet hits her in the thigh; the pregnant Zahra is left to bleed to death alone. In her final moments, the motif of shining rainbows recurs in a dreamlike sequence where boundaries between self, other, and the wide universe seem to dissolve. She becomes one with the rainbows in her final breath: " Wa-ʻudt arā aqwās quzaḥ fī al-samāwāt al-baydāʼ tadnū minnī bi-kathra mukhīfa," which I render as, "Again I behold rainbows in the white skies, in fearful plentitude, descending upon me" (translation mine.)[132] I render *tadnū* as *descend* to capture the sense of coming down to the world, to the *dunyā*, which comes from the same root. This is as opposed to any type of spiritual *ascent* to the hereafter, the *ākhira*, that this final sentence denies Zahra; indeed, denies to all until there is change. In this way, Zahra's qualities of porousness, indeed, her deeply felt empathy for and with others which nurtures hopes of

[131] In this regard, the murder of the porous Zahra is not unlike the murder of the porous Assouf in Ibrahim al-Koni's Bleeding of the Stone, to be analyzed in the next chapter.
[132] al-Shaykh, *Ḥikāyat Zahra*, 227. Peter Ford renders this phrase as, "I see rainbows processing towards me across the white skies with their promises only of menace." *See* al-Shaykh, *The Story of Zahra*, 184.

reconciliation throughout, takes a jarring but not unexpected Brechtian turn at the end, seeking to unsettle and provoke.

For Evelyne Accad, Zahra experiences war as a male activity from which there is no escape except suicide, an act she refers to as a "homeopathic cure through masochism."[133] al-'Īd identifies *The Story of Zahra* as representative of a "qualitative leap" in the Lebanese novel during the civil war that "offer[s] a rich world in which the fate of the oppressed woman merges with the fate of a society built on contradictions."[134] Similarly, Jan Tannous emphasizes the masochistic, pathological element of Zahra's decisions, framing her as a sacrificial figure.[135] On the other hand, Cooke suggests that in the novel the lines between the normal and abnormal are never drawn.[136] Stefen Meyer in turn focuses on the "paradoxical quality of defeat-as-victory-as-defeat."[137] Indeed, Zahra seems to find a productive agency in self-sacrifice. Yet, sadly, her small acts of feeling with others do little to turn the tide of the war. While she herself is exceedingly porous, the scene of her death, or suicide, *pace* Accad, casts the surrounding society as having closed itself off. It is a society that produced Zahra, and now it has abandoned her. Never overtly identified as belonging to any one sect, she embodies the cultural memory of no group in particular. To feel with the supremely porous, empathic Zahra is not to subscribe to any one sect in the war; it is to witness the absence of witnessing, and to feel ashamed.

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[133] Accad, *Sexuality and War*, 172.
[134] al-'Id, "Lebanon," 31.
[135] Ṭanūs, *Ṣūrat al-zāni wa-al-zāniyya fī al-adab al-ʿarabī al-muʿāṣir*, 279.
[136] Miriam Cooke, *War's Other Voices: Women Writers on the Lebanese Civil War* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 72.
[137] Stefan G. Meyer, *The Experimental Arabic Novel: Postcolonial Literary Modernism in the Levant* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 152–53.

The Frightful Echo Chamber: *Disciples of Passion*

Conversely, Hoda Barakat's *Disciples of Passion* is a text that challenges not only the idea that empathy is inherently prosocial in nature, but also the notion that the coding of empathy and feeling with others as affectively feminine is inherently constructive and palliative in nature. Indeed, in this text it is the *perversion* of the intersubjective that serves as accessory to psychosis, where the facile gendering of empathy breaks down, and where isolation gives way to the affects of horror. The nameless protagonist exists in an affective echo-chamber, where there is no way to verify if he ever succeeds in forging a meaningful connection with another human being. Perhaps he has murdered his lover or wife; perhaps he has been kidnapped and tortured, perhaps every fiber of his narration is a delusion. Kifah Hannah reads *Disciples of Passion* as "a surrealist allegory of the psychology of war"[138] where androgyny serves at once as the site of madness and of liberation,[139] while Moneera al-Ghadeer suggests the pathology of the protagonist alternatively as a function of the traumas of war, and of the timeless challenges of understanding between genders.[140] While these readings highly insightful, it is worth noting that this protagonist and his echo chamber *also* inspire the horror of the misfiring of the intersubjective. While such behavior may be left unchecked in a state of war, it is certainly not exclusive to times and places of conflict. Although such misfiring is in part normalized by the war narrative in which it is embedded, its unsettling power resonates far beyond its local context. And whereas in *The Story of Zahra*, the empathic is thematized in Zahra's words and actions, in *Disciples of*

[138] Hanna, *Feminism and Avant-Garde Aesthetics in the Levantine Novel*, 107.
[139] Ibid., 96–109.
[140] Moneera al-Ghadeer, "BOOK REVIEW: Hoda Barakat, Translated by Marilyn Booth. DISCIPLES OF PASSION.," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 2, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 115–16.

Passion empathy is located in the perversion of intersubjectivity and the critique of identitarian affiliations.

The protagonist's perversion of the intersubjective is made apparent from the very first lines of the novel: "After killing her, I sat down on a high boulder." (1) He feels an ecstatic oneness with the universe:

> What separated me from the firmament was air, only air, and such a delicate, frail barrier this air created, the air that seeped into my dilated lungs and made them a mere part of the rhythmic, remote pulse of the atmosphere. (1)

The weighty act of killing is presented as a mere prepositional clause, a mere descriptor, background information that helps explain the *main* point, which is of course, his narcissistic ecstasy and his oneness with the oceanic universe. His sense of expansiveness borders on the megalomanical as he imagines himself simultaneously commuting with the soul of his victim:

> [O]nly now do I occupy my own being, the whole of it [...] At the moment I had killed her, when I saw and realized I had killed her, I knew that I had breathed in her soul. I swallowed the angel of her, and it was within me." (2)

For the novel's protagonist, the belief his own ability to anticipate the thoughts and emotions of others proves to be little more than a screen for projecting his own desires onto others.

> She was completely different, but also completely the same as she had been and completely identical to me in my strong desire, every time, to burst into tears. Like an idiot, I said to myself. Here she is, right in front of you, with you. Waiting for you as if you are her lord and master. Whenever you feel desire. And she feels desire, too. (47)

While this reading of the woman's thoughts, feelings and desires may actually be correct, the text presents these observations as if in a frightful vacuum, with no external information via which to verify or deny the validity of the protagonist's interpersonal

observations. Indeed, it is this frightful vacuum in the text that ultimately casts the interpersonal in extreme doubt throughout. Thus, there are violent clashes ranging outside, but it is also raging inside as the protagonist, in his textual isolation, attempts to make sense of the thoughts and feelings of those around him. The result is that he at the very least *appears* to impose a carbon copy of his own subjectivity on his partner. The extensive violence both between the pair and beyond (92, 126) increases the sense of hesitation, disorientation and isolation in the text. Is the violence more or less fearsome than what the protagonist tells us? As the rare man who has not gone to fight, yet is nevertheless claiming to beat his partner, is he *more* or *less* violent than others? Anything seems possible with the pairing of such an unreliable narrator and such a chaotic series of altercations and explosions.

However, in an important twist, the isolation of the protagonist's narrative voice leaves open the possibility that the woman could be even more abusive and violent than he is. The novel alludes to this with the character of Hannah. For in addition to disrupting readerly expectations as to the prosocial nature of empathy, *Disciples of Passion* also disrupts assumptions about the gendering of violence.

Indeed, the woman's narrative silence enables her to don a veil of innocence, and the possibility of her murder may arouse readerly compassion. Prevailing gender stereotypes would certainly allow the woman's silence to invite readerly empathy for her. He says that she washes his feet, and in exhibiting womanly passivity, supposedly tells him, "You are my master, and also my servant; my disciple and my messenger and my prophet."

[141] However, what of a seemingly incongruous aside about Hannah, the self-appointed saint or *qiddīsa* of the village? This is the one passage of the surrealist text that evokes an air of historicity, of cohesion in time and space; it lacks the uncertainties and self-immolations present when the male lover narrates either his tribulations in the village or in the asylum.

Hannah leads the women, barefoot and bareheaded in the cold of night, in hysterical prayer through the public square – a unwieldy procession that emasculates the village men, leaving them fearfully clinging to the walls of the surrounding buildings or hiding in their homes. Hannah riles up the crowd, requesting that the Virgin take sides in the war, entreating her "to crush our enemy [...] to send sulfur and flame raining down on whoever threatens the Virgin's children, the Virgin's obedient servants." (96) It is as if Hannah, who is well known for her outspokenness in matters of war, defense and revenge, hypnotizes the women, inducing them to bare their hair and beat their exposed chests as if possessed. After losing her two brothers, the reader learns, she " began to dance and ululate, refusing for them to be buried." (96) At the time, she demanded “that the young men bring her two corpses, killed, from the enemy side," she, "who went out that night, screaming in front of our house, her hands oozing with oil." (96-97) Thus, like Asouf of Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī's *Nazīf al-Ḥajar* (*Bleeding of the Stone*), her character puts into question assumptions about the gendering of empathy. However, in this case, rather than transform the effeminate into the heroic, the text infuses feminine gestures with masculine affect, divesting the women in the square of the porousness evinced by Zahra.

[141] Hudā Barakāt, *Disciples of Passion*, 1st ed, Middle East Literature in Translation (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 59; Hudā Barakāt, *Ahl Al-Hawā* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Nahār, 1993), 83.

What emerges from the realist interlude of Hannah's leadership among the women of the village is a reiteration of the absence of empathy, connectivity, and intersubjective porousness in the relationship between the unnamed man and woman. Indeed, Hannah's rabble-rousing puts into question the assumption that women as such, and the unnamed woman/wife/victim in particular, is necessarily a passive victim, devoid of agency and incapable of violence or heinous action themselves. Hannah is the phallic mother who maintains the patriarchal order, utilizing her capacities of empathy to shame the men into taking revenge, thus perpetuating the conflict. That her chilling, gender-role defying leadership should comprise the only realist, seemingly documentary scene of the novel thus emphasizes the isolation that pervades the surreal of the novel writ large, shrouding in further doubt the capacities of the unnamed couple to understand or feel for one another, much less for those around them.

Yet, for a text that seems purposefully crafted to present a surreal world devoid of intersubjective porousness, words connoting some form of feeling for others are employed rather frequently, usually in the service of mocking weakness; the translation of the novel into English does not fully capture this mockery, which in turn suggests that the Arabic text, both in content and in form, may resist participation in a global linguistic economy of empathy.

For example, in the English edition of *Disciples of Passion*, translator Marilyn Booth consistently renders the Arabic *shafaqa* as "compassion." The megalomaniacal protagonist magnanimously bestows his attention upon an elusive female lover not "out of compassion for her," (32), he clarifies, but because he deems her so beneath him that she does not warrant entrée into the sanctum of his true, *inner* feelings. To feel compassion would be to

expose himself. Instead, he chooses the obfuscations, emotional isolation and power afforded by masquerade; this is a character numb, barricaded, and/or both, a character who never feels, or at least never expresses *shafaqa* for anyone. Conversely, those who *do* feel or express *shafaqa* in the text are marginal figures, and are treated as such by the protagonist. There is the doctor whom the protagonist imagines to have followed the pangs of his conscience back to Lebanon from a life of comfort abroad to treat the patients at Dayr al-Salib for the individual and social ills from which they suffer, "one eye shut tight from the burden of his compassion, the other lit up by an indefatigable enthusiasm for his work;"[142] the patients throw chairs at him and mock his talk of society. Then there are the bus passengers who watch a nursing baby fall from a mother's arms, out of the moving vehicle, and into an eternal oblivion as the group is hastily removed from the site of an impending disaster (46). Aloof and inward-looking at the time of the fall, our protagonist recalls this woman and her baby in his "many bouts of forgetting,"[143] his waking nightmares in the *Dayr al-ṣalīb* asylum. There, on the margins of the war and of the much-discussed *mujtamaʿ* [society] which the scorned doctor is so keen to discuss, the mother's and baby's screams become his, inescapably, yet belatedly, quietly (50). Suffice to say, *shafaqa* in the text is marginal, in short supply, and manifests itself within the cryptic returns of a seemingly autonomous affect, and those who do feel compassion, or *shafaqa*, are marginal, suffering and/or mocked.

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[142] Barakāt, *Ahl Al-Hawā*, 94. [Translation mine]

[143] In her Autumn, 2013 graduate seminar at the University of Texas at Austin, Barakat explained that she initiated the use of the Arabic *nisyān*, or "forgetting," in the plural, *nisyānāt.* Booth renders the term as "forgettings," while I further render it as akin to "waking nightmares."

Conclusion

As argued here, neither Barakat nor al-Shaykh's novels, different as they are, conform to the assumptions of the field of empathy studies as it emerges in the Anglophone sphere. Instead, the texts analyzed here craft and problematize a latent empathy, conceived, felled and in perpetual anticipation of revival in the decidedly non-multicultural space of the Lebanese Civil War. These actions comprise not so much a palliative tool for bringing a multicultural, multi-confessional, and/or multi-lingual society into affective alignment, but rather, a series of resounding calls to social action, couched in a frightful intersubjectivity, and amplified by the affective dissonance born of trauma denied witness. They eschew the cultural memory that follows from group affiliation, and instead take refuge in the communicative memory of the individual.

Thus, while *The Story of Zahra* crafts a productive femininity that ultimately finds agency in self-sacrifice, *Disciples of Passion* posits feminine feeling-with-others, especially in its excess and/or perversion, as destructive force. Indeed, *Disciples of Passion* offers the frightful, terrifying prospect of an atomized world overtaken by cruelty and devoid of compassion. In this world, the ability to feel with others either languishes, or worse, its misuse helps accelerate the breakdown of the human. The effect is downright Brechtian; it is a silent scream that resonates. Yet, despite their differences, both texts ultimately produce a deep unsettling born of trauma denied witness that refuses to come to rest on any feel-good, tonic chord.

In this chapter, empathy, trauma and affect serve as a lens via which to read two novels of the Lebanese Civil War. Contrary to what is suggested by the general tone of the scholarship, empathy is not *absent* from these texts, but rather, serves in its failure,

perversion, excess and/or latency, as an important foil. For empathy in these texts performs important work whose context is *distinct* from that of the Anglo-European Culture of Sentiment, as well as from the ethics-of-privilege considered by Lauren Berlant.[144] Instead, empathy in these texts, expressed through a strategically crafted frightful intersubjectivity, serves as a mechanism of protest, mourning and unsettling in the face of the breakdown of long-established patterns of *komsuluk.* On one level, the testimonial nature of the texts serves as witness to historical trauma and attests to a certain life drive. Yet, their affective dissonance ultimately denies the closure that the witnessing of trauma otherwise affords. Thus, empathy is still *present* -- just in a different guise, and towards a different literary effect. Whether via the hyper-femininity and affective porousness of Zahra, or the airtight echo chambers of *Disciples of Passion*, readings predicated first and foremost on the possibility of connectivity, although one that ultimately proves frightful, open up the empathic to spaces of *readerly* contamination and unsettlement. This unsettlement in turn calls not for the complacency of the feel-good empathy of the privileged against which Berlant warns, but rather gestures towards witnessing free of the filter of any one group's cultural memory. Given the stakes, this witnessing, invites, indeed requires, the affects of discomfort: shame, disbelief, disgust, sitting up straighter in the chair; and it is ultimately, perhaps, invites, in the long run, a more active solidarity born of the inability to continue otherwise.

[144] Berlant, "Introduction."

Chapter Two:
Chastened Intersubjectivity and the Intergroup Poetics of Affective Porousness/Impermeability in Ibrahim al-Koni's *Nazif al-Hajar* (*Bleeding of the Stone*) and Yoel Hoffmann's *Sefer Yosef (Book of Joseph)*

Establishing a Comparative Framework

The previous chapter considered the aesthetic manipulation of affective porousness and impermeability in the space of the Lebanese Civil War novel in order to express the sense of the breakdown of the human. The resulting dissonance alternately produces shame and disgust while also giving voice, in both novels, to a latent empathy awaiting revival. The novels in question further problematize the futility of compassion in a *society* that has become impervious, as well as the destructive elements of group cohesion that arise when there is a surfeit of empathic feeling for one's own sect or ethnolinguistic group to the exclusion of outsiders. In contrast, in this chapter, empathic feeling with others and with otherness serves to simultaneously reinforce *and* surmount ethnolinguistic group affiliation. Characters evincing cruelty and affective impermeability sow the seeds of violence wherever they are in whichever language they are depicted, while characters evincing sensitivity, or affective porousness, bear witness with all of their senses, defying political and linguistic boundaries to coalesce into new affective formations.[145]

Each of the two texts considered here, Ibrahim al-Koni's *Nazif al-Hajar* (*Bleeding of the Stone)* and Yoel Hoffmann's *Sefer Yosef (Book of Joseph)*, expresses an intergroup poetics of affective porousness and impermeability. This poetics simultaneously

[145] As discussed in the introduction, these readings follow Sara Ahmed's understanding of affect as historically contingent, subject to both contagion and blockade. *See* Ahmed, "Happy Objects."

strengthens *and* transcends ethnolinguistic group affiliation by embodying non-logocentric, non-egocentric modes of being, while further resisting the rigid separation between racial categories that has served as the handmaiden of 20th century nationalism, fascism, and colonialism. In these ways, these texts further resist the notion of a disenchanted modern where the only ethical option is to eschew group belonging.[146] In so doing, they gesture at a form of chastened intersubjectivity as an ethical response to the political violence born of the dark side of 20th century technological and scientific progress. It is a poetics via which realist prose, hyper-aware of the violence and disenchantment of the modern world, employs playful, unexpected juxtapositions -- of empiricism and magic in *Nazif al-Hajar*, and of empiricism and lyricism in the case of *Sefer Yosef*. These juxtapositions in turn make of the realist text a timeless, mystically inclined incantation, where the only thing to hold back catastrophe is the diaphanous string of words. And while *Sefer Yosef* is a Hebrew-language text set in Berlin, and Ibrahim al-Koni's *Bleeding of the Stone* is an Arabic-language text set in the Sahara, the comparison of the two texts helps shift from monolithic notions of "East" and "West" to a consideration of porousness and impermeability as a matrix of affective traffic signals on a global scale. The comparative reading, indeed the weaving together of the strings so that new formations of affective alignment may come into view, perhaps holds back the catastrophe a moment longer.

Despite the geographic, formal and linguistic distance between the two texts, they evince striking aesthetic similarities: both probe the limits of empiricism and progress, crafting a poetics of affective porousness and impermeability that simultaneously accepts

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[146] For examples, *see* Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, European Perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989).

and challenges history. Indeed, both echo the pathos of Walter Benjamin's Angel of History, his eyes transfixed upon the catastrophes of the past, who "would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole that what has been smashed" but instead is propelled, backwards, by the storm called progress.[147] *Nazif al-Hajar*, written in Arabic and published in 1990, concerns Tamasheq-speaking Tuareg nomads in 1930s, Italian-dominated Libya. Protagonist Asouf is a painfully shy, devoutly vegetarian, nomadic shepherd whose relationship to the desert and its animals approaches the intersubjective. He is tasked with leading European Christian pilgrims to the exquisite desert cave paintings of the supposedly extinct *moufflon* sheep; however, given his intimate knowledge of the desert and his own tragic family history, Asouf knows all too well that the *moufflon* still roam free. He uses his position to perpetuate the myth of their extinction in order to protect them; however, his resolve is tested when Qabil and Masoud, two Arabic-speaking, non-Tuareg *moufflon*-seeking hunters come seeking help; they bring trucks and machine guns, but first must locate their elusive prey. *Sefer Yosef*, on the other hand, written in Hebrew and published in 1988, concerns Yiddish-speaking Jews in 1930s Berlin. In this novella, Joseph is a mild-mannered, self-aware Jewish widower, a humble tailor who seeks to shield his son, referred to simply as *Yingele* (*little boy* in Yiddish), from the subtle changes and not-so-subtle violence born of the Nuremberg Laws and culminating in Kristallnacht. Thug-in-chief Siegfried Stopf lacks the self-awareness, humility, or depth of thought and feeling evinced by Joseph or Asouf; he is, however, quite capable with a club. In a way, Joseph and Asouf

[147] I quote here from Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Shocken, 1969), 257–58. This reading of the Angel of History is inspired by Rachel Feldhay-Brenner's work. *See* Rachel Feldhay Brenner, "Ḥevle Ha-Layda Ha-Bilti Efsharit," *Yisrael 15* 15 (or 2009 (5769 2008): 117–36.

cling to the Angel of History, shivering from the cold entering their porous bodies, while Siegfried, Cain and Masoud ride the incoming wind, blithely insulated by the latest, most advanced performance fabrics. Thus, despite the geographic distance between the two texts, they both similarly employ affective flows and blockages in order to trace the experiences of ethnolinguistic minorities caught in the crosshairs of the 20th century, whether of the nationalist, fascist or colonial variety.

Critics broadly agree on *Nazif al-Hajar's* ecumenical, mystical, and non-ideological texture. Roger Allen points to al-Koni's "heterodox blend of the pagan and the Islamic" as evinced by his wide selection of chapter epigraphs, ranging the Quran and the Bible, to Sophocles, Ovid, and French explorers.[148] This ecumenism establishes a non-sectarian space of concern for the consequences of rupture in the natural balance between man and his environment, wrought by the ubiquitous tension between tradition and modernity, which Allen identifies as a central motif of the text (Allen 245).

Both Ferial Ghazoul and Ziad Elmarsafy emphasize that *Nazif al-Hajar*'s Sufism, or Islamic mysticism, foregrounds a state of harmony between man and his surroundings. Both scholars agree that this is somewhat unique in Modern Arabic letters,[149] and Elmarsafy further argues that mysticism in post-war Arabic literature, and Sufism post-1980 in particular, "marks an attempt at reappropriating and defining individuality along

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[148] Roger Allen, *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction*, Second edition (Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 247.

[149] Ghazoul notes that the text's "point of view" is "unique," while Elmarsafy argues that the majority of Modern Arabic literature is realist and that in terms of scale, the Sufi trend he explores is a marginal phenomenon. *See* Ferial J. Ghazoul, "The Sufi Novel in the Maghreb," *Journal of Comparative Poetics* 17 (1997): 36; Ziad Elmarsafy, "Introduction: Ouverture," in *Sufism in the Contemporary Arabic Novel* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 12.

lines that evade the dogmas of institutional religious and political restriction [...] attest[ing] to a selfhood under siege and a dismayed worldview" (Elmarsafy 5-6).

While Elmarsafy analyzes the role of the Sufi Arabic lexicon within the text, Ghazoul considers *Nazif al-Hajar* a mystical, Sufi novel in the broad sense, coining the critical term "Sufi novel" to refer to a genre rather than to a specific vocabulary. Her definition is worth recalling as it gestures beyond the North African novels of which she writes, towards the oeuvre of Yoel Hoffmann:

> [A Sufi novel] strives to ponder rather than to record, to be swept away rather than to document, towards enjoyment rather than indoctrination [...] It is, in short, a narrative literary work [...] [that] forms a marvelous atmosphere full of strangeness and oddity, deconstructs the reader from within, and demolishes accepted narratives.[150]

Here, she delineates a somewhat broad, doctrinally uncommitted and idiosyncratic definition of the Sufi novel that seems more suited to a critique of the aesthetics of *iltizam*, or political commitment in Arabic literature.[151] The definition, however, also creates a space for texts whose formal strangeness critique a whole range of ideologies rooted in the notion of progress, from those that enable the pillage the desert via machine gun and helicopter, to those that burnish the myth of the monolingual, New Hebrew *Sabra* who came from the sea.[152] And where Ghazoul suggests that the goal of a Sufi novel is to ponder, rather than to record, it is worth noting: perhaps the goal of a Sufi novel can also be seen as pondering alternate historical impulses and possibilities; it is both a pondering *and* a

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[150] Ghazoul, "The Sufi Novel in the Maghreb," 28–29. Article in Arabic; this translation and all that follow are my own. Ghazoul's grapping with the seeming contradiction between Sufism's aim to dissolve the self in God's presence, on the one hand, and novel as bourgeois form focused on the individual, is particularly trenchant.

[151] *Iltizam*, or Sartrean commitment as it developed in the Arab world, is a central topic in Modern Arab intellectual history. *See* Badawi, "Commitment in Contemporary Arabic Literature"; Di-Capua, "Arab Existentialism."

[152] This critique is part and parcel of Hoffmann's work. A concise starting point on the Sabra is the work of Oz Almog. *See* Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*, S. Mark Taper Foundation Imprint in Jewish Studies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

recording, not of history, but of *memory*, namely idiosyncratic, communicative memory where the lived experience of the individual exists in tension with larger cultural narratives.[153]

Alternatively, Miriam Cooke sums up the text's mysticism, ecumenism and alternate historical narratives in terms of magical realism,[154] whereby "supernatural events [...] are not surprising or frightening, they simply happen and neither the character nor the reader questions their reality" (12). It is via this magical-realist normalization of the supernatural that al-Koni's text challenges both logocentric and egocentric modes of being.

In the analysis that follows, Ghazoul's open-ended notion of a Sufi novel as a text that strives to ponder, in essence to recast a documented and documentable historical narrative in strange and defamiliarized phenomenological terms, figures most centrally. While Elmarsafy's close attention to *Nazif al-Hajar's* Sufi lexicon is informative, the absence of comparable, Kabbalistic lexicon in *The Book of Joseph* renders his theologically sophisticated approach less relevant here. Furthermore, Ghazoul's attentiveness to the human intergroup encounter is more in line with the current project than Elmarsafy and Cooke's emphasis on the Deleuzian *becoming animal*. Lastly, the current reading, predicated on affective porousness and impermeability, seeks to build upon and complicate the East-West, tradition-modernity distinctions identified by both Cooke and Allen.

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[153] The literature on history and memory is vast. Here I follow the understanding of Jan Assmann. *See* Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory."

[154] miriam cooke, "Magical Realism in Libya," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 41, no. 1/2 (2010): 9–21. For other readings of *Nazif al-Hajar* as a magical realist text, *see* Stefan Sperl, "'The Lunar Eclipse': History, Myth and Magic in Ibrāhīm Al-Kawnī's First Novel," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 9, no. 3 (December 1, 2006): 237–55, doi:10.1080/14752620600999821; Alexandra Chreiteh, "Fantastic Cohabitations: Magical Realism in Arabic and Hebrew and the Politics of Aesthetics" (Ph.D., Yale University, 2016), http://search.proquest.com/pqdtglobal/docview/1814758436/C030B5DC1C5943BDPQ/1. Ghazoul also considers Sufi novels such as *Nazif al-Hajar* in light of the magical realism of Latin American authors, saying that both genres, though distinct, share an ability to "express the local mood" (Ghazoul 29).

Although *Sefer Yosef* is not a magical realist novel, critics have read it as crafting a similarly strange and marvelous aesthetic via distinct formal and generic means that Rachel Albeck-Gidron has termed *lyrical realism*. In the *Sefer Yosef* collection,[155] Albeck-Gidron posits, "[T]he fine lines between delirium and sobriety, insanity and sanity are breached by lyric and metaphors that cross the borders of the discourse of logic."[156] The result is an aesthetic that expresses "deep compassion and an infinite sadness" (ibid). It is as if *Sefer Yosef* articulates cause and effect relationships that while not untrue, are sufficiently unorthodox, expansive and mystically inclined[157] that they undermine more conventional, concise forms of scientific observation. In a similar vein, Karen Grumberg considers how Hoffmann's protagonists experience place "chronotopically," as a form of Bakhtinian *place-time* harboring multiple landscapes. According to Grumberg, these multiple landscapes are rendered inhabitable on account of characters' awareness of the "limitations of [Jewish] claim[s] to place in Europe."[158] In her reading, the chronotopic experience of place is key to being able to "move about in the world of Forms [and] imagine a world beyond the one at [one's] fingertips" (194). Indeed, her notion of place as chronotopic place-time is perhaps the necessary corollary to the affectively porous body.

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[155] In Hebrew, the novella was published in an eponymous collection with three others.

[156] Original in Hebrew; this translation and all other translations from Albeck-Gidron's book are my own. Rachel Albeck-Gidron, *ha-Shelishi ha-efshari: meḥḳar monografi ʻal ʻavodah shel Yoʻel Hofman = Exploring the third option: a critical study of Yoel Hoffmann's works*, Masah ḳriṭit (Or Yehudah : Be'er Sheva': Devir ; Heḳsherim, ha-makhon le-ḥeḳer ha-sifrut ṿeha-tarbut ha-Yehudit ṿeha-Yiśre'elit, Universiṭat Ben-Guryon ba-Negev, 2016), 13.

[157] Hoffmann's oeuvre is not typically read as mystical per se; recent scholarship that has focused on mysticism in Modern Hebrew literature has focused almost exclusively on poetry. *See* Ḥamuṭal Bar-Yosef, *Mysticism in 20th Century Hebrew Literature*, Israel : Society, Culture and History (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2010); Shachar Pinsker, "'Never Will I Hear The Sweet Voice Of God': Religiosity and Mysticism In Modern Hebrew Poetry," *Prooftexts* 30, no. 1 (2010): 128–46, doi:10.2979/prooftexts.2010.30.1.128.

[158] Grumberg, *Place and Ideology in Contemporary Hebrew Literature*, 187–88.

Other critics have emphasized *Sefer Yosef*'s enchantment of the ordinary via formal means,[159] its nuanced engagement with European Christian culture,[160] and its "postmonolingualism" as critique and reclamation.[161] The multilingualism of Hoffmann's texts in particular have been treated at length, and while this line of inquiry is extremely interesting, the current project touches upon it only insofar as linguistic difference within the text gestures towards the coming-into-alignment of seemingly divergent affective matrixes born of distinct ethnolinguistic subject positions. Suffice to say, it is Albeck-Gidron's notion of lyrical realism and Grumberg's notion of a place-time granting entrée to the World of Forms that most closely inform the analysis of *Sefer Yosef* in this chapter.

While *Sefer Yosef* does not normalize the supernatural or employ an overtly Sufi (or Kabbalistic) mystical vocabulary as does *Nazif al-Hajar*, in its lyrical realism and chronotopic places, it stakes a claim in the sphere of Ghazoul's Sufi novel. In this way, both texts seek to recover a form of enchantment while maintaining the authority of the empirically minded observer, the rational, modern critic of history and progress.[162] The result is a cross-generic search for the Angel of History and the articulation of an alternative to Kantian ethics. In its tempered abeyance of the self-other boundary, especially vis-a-vis others simultaneously brought near and yet made distant by 20th century political upheaval, it suggests affective matrix as key to ethical action.

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[159] Neta Stahl, "'Not Being at One's Home': Yoel Hoffmann and the Formal Representation of Otherness," *Prooftexts* 30, no. 2 (2010): 217–37, doi:10.2979/prooftexts.30.2.217.

[160] Neta Stahl, *Other and Brother: Jesus in the 20th-Century Jewish Literary Landscape* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[161] Maya Barzilai, "Translation on the Margins: Hebrew-German-Yiddish Multilingualism in Avraham Ben Yitzhak and Yoel Hoffmann," *Journal of Jewish Identities* 7, no. 1 (February 2, 2014): 109–28, doi:10.1353/jji.2014.0002.

[162] On the displacement of traditional, Islamic historiography in the Egyptian context, *see* Yoav Di-Capua, *Gatekeepers of the Arab Past: Historians and History Writing in Twentieth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

Mystical Experience, Ethical Response and Chastened Intersubjectivity as Theoretical Opening

In light of existing criticism, the comparative reading of a magical realist and lyrical realist text offered here shines a light upon a lacuna in contemporary models of empathy: the role of mystical experience in cultivating an ethical response to the pain of others. In his eight-part taxonomy of empathy, social psychologist Daniel Batson offers *emotional contagion* as an experience of *coming to feel as another person feels*, in which the distinction between self and other is absent.[163] It would seem that this type of empathy most closely approximates experiences of religious ecstasy or Sufi *fanāʾ* i.e. the dissolution of the self within the universe.[164] Sensitive response to the pain of others, however, is typically seen to require what Batson terms *empathic concern*, or maintaining a *distinction* between self and other while simultaneously feeling a congruent, i.e. similarly valenced emotion *for* another. What would the aesthetics of empathy look like should the boundaries between emotional contagion and empathic concern be ambiguous? This would be an ethics where, contrary to the Kantian model, the *absence* of a self-other distinction would be a crucial

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[163] Daniel Batson, "These Things Called Empathy: Eight Related but Distinct Phenomena," in *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy*, ed. Jean Decety and William John Ickes (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2009), 3–15.

[164] For analysis of Egyptian intellectuals who looked to synthesize Modern psychology and the mystical experiences of Sufis, *see* Omnia El Shakry, *The Arabic Freud: Psychoanalysis and Islam in Modern Egypt* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017). I thank Omnia for sharing the manuscript of her third chapter with me, "The Aesthetic Sensibility of Mysticism." In the tradition of American Pragmatism, the premier thinker at the intersection of science and mystical experience is William James; *see* William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, Centenary ed (London ; New York: Routledge, 2002), http://www.UTXA.eblib.com/EBLWeb/patron?target=patron&extendedid=P 180795 0&. On the rejection of hegemonic cultural forms *see* Arturo Escobar, "Imagining a Post-Development Era," in *Anthropology of Development and Globalization*, ed. Marc Edelman and Angelique Haugerud, A Verba Mundi Book (Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005), 341–51, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/lib/utxa/detail.action?docID=228518.

proximate cause of prosocial action.[165] The comparative reading at hand suggests the literary as key to entering this space *between* emotional contagion and empathic concern. Here, language evinces a commitment to empirical observation of both self and world ordered by rational laws, while simultaneously embodying the drive towards ecstatic dissolution of self in other. In *Sefer Yosef*, the commitment to empirical observation is evinced in the curious adherence to the language of cause and effect, but often to nonsensical ends. Such is the case with the courtship between Gurnisht and Elizabeth, which begins when a fly sticky from apple strudel lands "on a tiny drop of sweat, as clear as crystal, on [Elizabeth's] nose" (Hoffmann 28). The siren-like melody of her voice as she shoes the insect away entrances Gurnisht, who subsequently follows Elizabeth back to her home in London, settles down with her, and joins his father-in-law's supremely successful tailoring business. All the while, he is joyfully reunited with Yiddish-speaking kith and kin from back in Hungary, and evades the meticulously mechanized (ie. modern) Nazi dragnet. The *cause* of all of this good fortune, of course, is readily apparent via rational observation: it is "all because of a fly in Berlin" (Hoffmann 29). On the other hand, in *Nazif al-Hajar*, the lexicon of magical realist enchantment slowly recedes in sober assessment of technology's destructive power. Prefiguring the passage in which the desert gazelles debate the virtues of self-sacrifice to the humans for the greater good of the herd, the chapter entitled "cannibals" describes how Cain and Masoud's "jinni wheels" enable them to fulfill every child's fantasy of caressing the gazelle's "graceful neck", gazing into its "sad, intelligent eyes," kissing the blessed creature and "clutching him close" to one's heart (al-Koni 88).

[165] For a neuroscientific take on this possibility, *see* Stephanie D. Preston and Frans B. M. de Waal, "Empathy: Its Ultimate and Proximate Bases," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 25, no. 1 (February 2002): 1–20, doi:10.1017/S0140525X02000018.

Here, such a sensuous, otherwise inconceivable encounter with the graceful gazelle is enabled by the magical contraption of "jinni wheels." This stunning vision of encounter, however, is so patently and painfully opposed to Cain and Masoud's intentions that it serves to mock them. As the "jinni wheels" are revealed for what they really are, a Land Rover gifted by an American officer, the gazelle is stripped of both its grandeur and its mystery, "exhausted, broken, sweat soaking his body, his lips covered with foam" (ibid). The final blow is the nonchalant, pragmatic, and callous tone of Cain's agenda. Imperious to both the creature's beauty and its suffering, Cain the hunter simply plans to pillage, stuff himself, and sell what is left to make a handsome profit: "[He] had little thought for the rules of nature. His concern was to hunt just as many gazelles as he could, and so quench the flames between his teeth and calm his belly, then sell the rest to the American officer at the camp" (ibid). Here, the sharp, if brief generic shift in the text serves to perform, to shame and to mock aspects of the tradition-modernity tension that Allen identifies. Thus, in both texts, language evinces a hyper-awareness of the violence and disenchantment of the modern world, yet simultaneously challenges such a state of affairs by employing playful, unexpected juxtapositions in construction of cause, effect and responsibility.

Such is the state of chastened intersubjectivity,[166] whether with ethnolinguistic others or with the natural world: its tortured double embrace of affective porousness and a hyper-awareness of the violence born of scientific progress stares down the history of the 20th century. It is humbly, even mournfully aware of its own limitations, yet still continues

[166] Luc Boltanski phrases this differently, as "ethical intersubjectivity" enabled by "aperspectival objectivity" coupled with the imagination. I prefer the term *chastened* as it better captures the sense of loss embodied by Benjamin's angel. *See* Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999). *As quoted in* Palumbo-Liu, *The Deliverance of Others*, 18–21.

to strive for aesthetic and ethical restoration in the face of existential solitude, mortality, and somber knowledge of modernity's destructive, atomizing power. Ghazoul and Elmarsafy's mysticism, Albeck-Gidron's lyrical realism, and Grumberg's chronotopic experiences of place don't employ the terminology of emotional contagion, empathic concern, or *intersubjectivity*, as such. Yet all of these readings nevertheless gesture towards it. Articulating the mystical literary aesthetic in the language of psychology and neuroscience is itself perhaps an unexpected juxtaposition that underscores similar moves within the texts themselves.

The image of the chastened, intersubjectively-feeling Angel of History further illuminates the lives of both authors. Ibrahim al-Koni, a Libyan author of Tuareg descent, is among the luminaries of Modern Arabic letters, having published over 60 titles. Born in 1948 in the oasis of Ghadames, he lived a traditional nomadic life as a child and did not learn Arabic until he was 11. He pursued doctoral work at the Maxim Gorky institute in Moscow, and many critics see the obvious influence of Dostoevsky, the topic of his incomplete dissertation, in his literary work. As numerous sources have pointed out, al-Koni sees his project as creating a tradition of the desert novel more than he aligns himself with any particular national or nationalist literary project.[167] He currently resides in Switzerland, a country whose attitude towards the natural world he says suits his own and

[167] Ziad Elmarsafy, "Ibrahim Al-Koni: Writing and Sacrifice," in *Sufism in the Contemporary Arabic Novel* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 108; Hartmut Fähndrich, "The Desert as Homeland and Metaphor: Reflections on the Novels of the Tuereg Writer Ibrahim Al-Koni," in *Arabic Literature: Postmodern Perspectives*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Andreas Pflitsch, and Barbara Winckler (London: Saqi, 2010), 333; Meg Furniss Weisberg, "Spiritual Symbolism in the Sahara: Ibrahim Al-Koni's Nazīf Al-Ḥajar," *Research in African Literatures* 46, no. 3 (2015): 46, doi:10.2979/reseafrilite.46.3.46. For consideration of al-Koni as a Libyan novelist, *see* Ghazoul, "The Sufi Novel in the Maghreb."

helps sustain his desert writings in exile.[168] Like Benjamin's angel, al-Koni persists in creating a living novelistic tradition born of a way of life that is slowly disappearing.

Yoel Hoffmann is an Israeli scholar of Zen Buddhism who began publishing literary works in his 50s. Born in 1937 in Brashov in what is today Romania, he moved with his father's family to Israel in 1938 after the death of his mother. In his childhood home both German and Hungarian were spoken (Albeck-Gidron 11). His publications include about ten books of lyric prose, as well as numerous translations from Japanese to Hebrew and to English of Zen-Buddhist texts.[169] He is a polarizing figure in the Israeli literary scene on account of his impressionistic, experimental style. As Karen Grumberg notes, Hoffmann is the same age as writers of the *Palmach* generation that fought in 1948, yet perhaps given his late entry into the literary sphere, stylistically his works are classified as contributing to the postmodern trends of authors publishing since the late 1980s including Orly Castel-Bloom.[170] Similar in spirit to the work of al-Koni and Benjamin's angel, Hoffmann seeks to reclaim the European Jewish experience and idiom in the wake of the Holocaust.

Affective Porousness, the Childlike and Multidirectional Memory

The poetics of both al-Koni's *Nazif al-Hajar* and Hoffmann's *Sefer Yosef* are predicated upon characterizations of awe-filled protagonists imminently and deeply

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[168] mlynxqualey, "A Celebration of Ibrahim Al-Koni, the Desert, Russian Literature, and 'Swiss Sufism,'" *Arabic Literature (in English)*, December 23, 2010, https://arablit.org/2010/12/23/a-celebration-of-ibrahim-al-koni-the-desert-russian-literature-and-swiss-sufism/.

[169] His literary works include the following: Sefer Yosef, Yerushalayim: Keter, 1998; Bernhardṭ, Yerushalayim: Keter, 1989; Kristus shel dagim, Yerushalayim: Maḳsṿel-maḳmilan, keter, 1991; Guṭapersha, Yerushalaim: Keter, 1993; Ma shlomekh dolores, Yerushalayim: Keter, 1995; Halev hu kaṭmandu, Yerushalaom: Keter, 2000; Hashunara vehashmeṭerling, Yerushalayim: Keter, 2001; Efrayim, Yerushalayaim: Keter, 2003; *Curriculum Vitae,* Yerushalayim: Keter, 2007; and Matsavei ruaḥ, Yerushalayim: Keter, 2010. *See* Albeck-Gidron, *ha-Shelishi ha-efshari*, 178.

[170] Grumberg, *Place and Ideology in Contemporary Hebrew Literature*.

porous to their lived environments and their familial genealogy, endlessly feeling across boundaries of sentiment via a chastened intersubjectivity. These protagonists alternate the task of narration with supremely coarse, voracious, and insatiable antagonists; the alternation serves to foreground the centrality of connectivity and the heightened stakes of its absence. In *Nazif al-Hajar*, chapters foregrounding Asouf's point of view alternate with those foregrounding Cain's. Similarly, in *Sefer Yosef*, sections narrating Joseph, Yingele and Gurnisht's points of view are interspersed with short, choppy passages zooming in Siegfried's crude but growing destructive force. Each text thus highlights a push and pull between sensitivity, weakness and vulnerability, on the one hand, and imperviousness, strength, and power on the other, and these pushes-and pulls help dramatize the historic and interpersonal conditions under which "chastened intersubjectivity" necessarily emerges.

Affective porousness in *Sefer Yosef* is developed on the surface of the bodies of a complex of three characters: the tailor Joseph Silverman, his son Yingele ("little boy" in Yiddish), and his apprentice, Gurnisht ("nothing," in Yiddish). Each member of this complex embodies a different element of porousness, serving as a foil against the impermeability of antagonist Siegfried Stopf. From the outset, tailor Joseph Silverman is a thoughtful, sensitive father who after the murder of his wife Chaya-Leah, fled from Poland to Berlin with his infant son. His modest lifestyle belies a richness, even creative unorthodoxy, of thought and feeling as he pursues his overriding life goals: to keep the memory of his late wife alive, and to protect his son from tide of anti-Jewish sentiment rising on the continent.

The imagery of the needle and thread play a significant role in characterizing Joseph's striking awareness of and internal meditation upon the construction and

dissolution of boundaries between self and other, and self and universe. Indeed, Joseph's approach to the suffering inherent in human life in the world (the Buddhist *dakkha*) reads as a perpetual state of Zen meditation, where intense focus on phenomenological, indeed, affective nature of experience is prioritized over intellectual analysis of doctrine.[171] For example, the object of the Singer Sewing Machine, considered in an analytical, historical context, evokes the global ascendancy of mass production and the odd bedfellows of wartime industrial militarization.[172] Yet, for the ever mindful Joseph, the elegant whirring of the device, brought to his shop by a traveling salesman, elicits the expansive, heavenly sensation of the rising and falling of a virtuoso violin bow, "whirl[ing] like the wind [...] until one's soul hovered in the upper worlds" (1-2). Like a disciple seeking the spiritual enlightenment and freedom-from-*dakkha* of Buddhahood, Joseph focuses on the sensations of being in order to feel intersubjectively with and develop compassionate concern, the Buddhist *karuṇā*,[173] for the universe around him. When he himself sews, his hand rhythmically guides the needle up and down until it is no longer a human hand, but rather a wing (2); Joseph at work transcends the boundaries of the human body, indeed, the human species. Whether technologically advanced or timelessly traditional, sewing is thus an act

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[171] Michelle Barker, "Zen Buddhism," ed. J. Gordon Melton and Martin Baumann, *Religions of the World: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices* (ABC-CLIO, 2010), 3179, go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?p=GVRL&sw=w&u=txshracd2598&v=2.1&id=GALE%7CCX1766501679&it=r&asid=685ab3b302f17205e02d4afe7c03fb80.

[172] Singer's German plant east of the Elba produced machine guns for the Nazis. *See* "Truman Library - Charles P. Kindleberger Oral History Interview," accessed June 24, 2017, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/kindbrgr.htm.

[173] *Karuṇā* is generally defined as the "wish that others be free from suffering" and is one of the virtues cultivated and valorized among all branches of Buddhism. *See* Roger R. Jackson, "Karuṇā (Compassion)," ed. Robert E. Buswell, *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, Gale Virtual Reference Library (Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?p=GVRL&sw=w&u=txshracd2598&v=2.1&id=GALE%7CCX3402600234&it=r&asid=bf41bd82b3805fc38e8e1b5e1f863f5e.

in which Joseph's body directs his soul beyond the self and beyond the human body, aiming towards the heavens. In the same vein, Joseph resists his lust for the young orphan Miriam by focusing on the needle, thread and cloth before him; he resists desire and worldly craving in the pursuit of Buddhahood, musing "I am sewing the skin of my body [...] such an hour belongs to another world" (74). The image of sewing one's own skin suggests first and foremost building awareness of self, other, and the borderline between the two. It also suggests the restraining of the eager self with the infinitesimal yet repeated pricks of the needle; an attempt simultaneously feeble yet powerful to remind the self to let the other be. Joseph Silverman the meditative tailor is thus a character porous to being *affected* by others, and sensitive to the ethical demands of existing with others in the world.

Yingele, like his father Joseph, is characterized by the sensations he encounters and by the way in which he gingerly inscribes himself in a lattice of others and otherness. Yingele's place in his family is marked by touch and being touched; affect and being affected. In the still-warm flesh and smooth skin of a dismembered chicken (37) Yingele yearns for the caress of his deceased mother. Playing sheep-and-wolves under the sheets with his father, he draws a sense of security from drawing physically near to Joseph, while Joseph in turn finds himself "faint[ing] from pleasure" during the game, feeling himself again a baby safely ensconced in his mother's womb (38). Yingele, whose name (little boy. ie. Chaya Leah's little boy) implies not an independent self, but rather, a fleeting, time-bound *relationship* to another, becomes embodied in the text only as he is relating to and being affected by other bodies and other selves.

While both Joseph and Yingele evince a meditative quality, Yingele's self-questioning in particular evokes the Rinzai Zen practice of meditation upon *kōans*,

"paradoxical questions, phrases, or stories that cannot be solved using intellectual reasoning."[174] Pondering a *kōan* brings disciple nearer to enlightenment, and true understanding "is thought to entail a sudden and direct nondualistic experience of an ultimate reality, which fundamentally differs from any intellectual understanding."[175] Yingele is transfixed by a question another child poses at school: "Can God [...] create a stone so heavy that he cannot lift it?" (Hoffmann 52). The enigmatic, *kōan*-like question remains forefront in his thoughts, demanding his attention. At some later point Yingele recalls a seemingly unrelated instance when he made of his palm a stretcher with which to rescue a trembling, unsteady bird from the park. He brings the creature home and tucks it amidst warm cloths in a box-turned-bed, yet in the morning finds it dead, "its eyes [shut] and its body frozen." (Hoffmann 53). Suddenly, he has understood the *kōan*: "[I]n remembering the bird, Yingele understands that God cannot lift the stone" (ibid). Suffering, death and evil shall ever remain part and parcel of the Lord's holy creation; another aspect of affective porousness is thus internalizing the limits of the natural world.

For Yingele, even simple questions and songs take on a *kōan*-like quality. The drunken German on Friedrichstrasse, in a bald-faced effort to pick up some extra spending money, offers to teach Yingele a nonsensical German song "about nothing." (Hoffmann 62). In the song, the speaker gets up from eating meatballs in order to answer a knock, yet finds only his own self at the door. The raison d'être of the song seems to be the alliteration between *klops* (meatballs) and *klopts* (knock). Nevertheless, Yingele, ponders the song the

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[174] Barker, "Zen Buddhism," 3179.

[175] MORTEN SCHLÜTTER, "Kōan," ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr., *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, Gale Virtual Reference Library (Macmillan Reference USA), 426, accessed July 12, 2017, go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?p=GVRL&sw=w&u=txshracd2598&v=2.1&id=GALE%7CCX3402600239&it=r&asid=a23c752c4f2e7fc884c60a13257a7ef0.

entire week, yet "he understands it only on the Sabbath when he sees the cat chasing its own shadow" (Hoffmann 63). Here, Yingele turns a "nothing" of drunken origins into an enlightening *kōan*, not only via meditation, but also via the act of translation, from Berlin German to Jewish German, the drunkard's dialect to his own.[176]

Gurnisht, the third of the triumvirate of protagonists in the text, is the tailor's apprentice who sojourned in Berlin and attached himself to Joseph's family and workshop. He is described as a snake; although he seduces woman after woman, "there is no poison in his bite" (21). Gurnisht's insatiable love of the fairer sex, which invariable impels him to cross ethnolinguistic lines and court a range of non-Jewish women of multiple European nationalities, is depicted as lighthearted folly; his character serves as a foil for Siegfried Stopf's single-minded focus on brute conquest.

Asouf of *Nazif al-Hajar* would be in good company with the protagonists of Hoffmann's work; he is disproportionately affected by the few people he meets and by the wide desert of flora and fauna surrounding him. Asouf feels for and with the desert animals, seeking to protect them from the ravages of modern hunting technology. He is reduced to panic when engaging in even the simplest interaction with members of the passing caravan so that he and his mother can purchase grain and not starve. His body is deeply affected by the approach of the distant traders: "highly nervous [...] sweat was trickling down his neck and back, and he didn't know what to do with his hands [...] quivering with terror now, he jumped and vanished behind the rocks" (al-Koni 29). Although he laments his reactions,

[176] Levenston and Treister's translation seem to mistakenly identify the song as Yiddish; the original Hebrew identifies it as a dialect of Berlin. Yiddish scholar Itzik Gottesmann confirms that the song appears to be in German. *See* Yoel Hoffmann, *Sefer yosef* (Yerushalayim: Keter, 1988), 97; Itzik Gottesmann, "Yiddish Song Question," July 12, 2017.

calling them feminine, "girlish shyness" (al-Koni 32), they nevertheless seem to exempt him from the madness of consumption that drive Cain and Masoud's unsatiable consumption.

Michael Rothberg offers the character of the child "as a site of uneasy, multidirectional memory [...] as the bearer of memory and postmemory in a moment of violent global transformation."[177] In other words, the child is permitted that which is foreclosed by the choices of modern adulthood: to feel *congruently* (Batson) or be in affective alignment (Ahmed) with a range of bodies and narratives.[178] Although Rothberg does not articulate it as such, in his reading the child is *porous,* open to feeling and knowing that which contravenes both its own narrative and survival as such, yet without compromising the child's (future) stake as rationally minded citizen-subject. Yet, it is not only the *child*, per se, but perhaps also the c*hildlike* that functions thus. For Joseph, Yingele, Gurnisht and Asouf are all imbued with a deep and abiding patience, openness, and *childlike* capacity for awe; these qualities in turn are what *enable* intersubjective experience and a porousness to the affects, memories and history of others, however chastened and self-aware in nature. If as Rothberg suggests, the child, and by extension, the *childlike*, enable an affective porousness that can accept and feel with the cross-currents of multidirectional memory, then affective imperviousness would correspond to the rejection of the possibility of multidirectional memory and an insistence on maintaining a unidirectional historical narrative. Considered in this light, affective imperviousness

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[177] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 27.

[178] As noted above, for Batson congruency is a key component of the experience of empathic concern. In this context it means feeling a similarly-valenced emotion as another, so feeling a positive emotion on account of someone else's potentially different but still positive emotion and vice versa, ie. feeling glad that someone else feels content, or feeling sad that someone else feels angry. Sara Ahmed draws on this same concept in her discussion of affective alignment and blockages.

comprises a *refusal* of congruency with ethnolinguistic others or the natural world and an insistence upon the shutting out of that which does not fit; such are the characters of Siegfried in *Sefer Yosef* and Cain and Masoud in *Nazif al-Hajar*.

Unlike Joseph, Yingele and Gurnisht, Siegfried is affected by precious little in his surroundings. Instead, his body is marked as the impervious site of disaster potential, pulsing, ferocious, waiting to unfold. From the very first paragraph, the breakdown of ethical norms in Nazi Germany is posited as contingent upon the line of sight between Siegfried's eyes and "the golden down" (1) covering his thighs. Had Siegfried's eyes remained gazing thus, continuing to do as they had been doing in the year 1932, the text implies, the universe would have continued in its course, and the rise of Nazism would have been averted. It is as if the brief flutter of the muscle above his knee is the cause of it all. His aggression knows no bounds. He volunteers for the Nazi-organized public work brigades, displaying the relative simplicity, indeed, superficiality of his thoughts as he muses about the nature of happiness: "Sometimes you're happy, sometimes you're not happy. But you're usually not sad and not happy" (50). At other times, Siegfried responds to inquiry both serious and playful with outright hostility, even sarcasm with simple though belligerent phrases such as "Kiss my ass" (59). At every turn, he seeks to dominate, conquer and destroy; unable to feel compassion, he is only capable of one type of self-referential thought: self-congratulation. He summarily seeks to impose his will on women (11), weaker friends (62-63), the elderly (66-67), domestic animals (71), and even insects (37). In the case of the insects, which he crushes before candlelight before retiring to sleep, it is notable that he evinces no sense of disgust, no fear of contamination.

Similarly, Cain of *Nazif al-Hajar* is characterized by the stalking and breaching of the porousness of others. As a child, the ill-omened Cain was violently orphaned; he was nursed on the blood of Gazelles, at one point thrusting his head in the open wound of a dead animal in order to imbibe his fill (81). Not satisfied that his guide in Wadi Matkhandoush should be a vegetarian, Cain "thrust[s] a piece of meat into Asouf's mouth" (al-Koni 33). When Asouf attempts to hide evidence of the existence of the Waddan, Cain similarly pierces Asouf with a suspicious stare (al-Koni 78). With bloody raw meat as his sustenance of choice, Cain, synecdoche for the fever of capitalist consumption is cursed to desire his fill of the flesh of man. He always looks outwards, to penetrate and consume. It is as if his impervious body is only capable of acting, incapable of being acted upon, indeed, incapable of being *affected* at all.

The stakes of affective imperviousness as a rejection of congruency come into greater focus against the backdrop of an understanding of modernity in which political violence is part and parcel of both material progress, and of the ensuing expansions and contractions of the public sphere. Channeling Benjamin's Angel of History, Hannah Arendt notes that it is as if there are two types of people in modern times: "those who believe in human omnipotence (who think that everything is possible if one knows how to organize the masses for it) and those for whom powerlessness has become the major experience of their lives."[179] In other words, Arendt sees mankind split into two camps in the modern era, the opportunists and the victims; born are both of the forms of the new violence of the 20th

[179] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New ed, Harvest/HBJ Book (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), xvii.

century and beyond.[180] For Arendt, affective imperviousness would thus be an integral component of the modern human condition. It is as much a factor in the machine-gun wielding desert hunters' "betrayal of nature [...] through the ugliest trickery" (al-Koni 88) as in Siegfried's preternatural capacity for cruelty. In both cases, amplification of affective imperviousness, whether via technological advancement or political regression, is accompanied by an impulse to turn away from such rapacity, to commune with the animals, the outcasts, and the humble pilgrims in prayer.

In the literary worlds of the two texts, the most significant character distinctions are not ethnolinguistic or national, but rather, affective. Unlike in the Lebanese Civil War novels of Khoury, Barakat and al-Shaykh, considered in the previous chapter, in *Nazif al-Hajar* and *Sefer Yosef*, ethnolinguistic affiliations *retain* prominence, but only so that the narratives can in turn craft provocative juxtapositions: affective sharing *across* ethnolinguistic lines, enabled by mutual affective porousness; or, alternatively, affective sharing *within* a single ethnolinguistic group stymied by the presence of affective impermeability. In both texts, the ever-present alternation between porous and impervious points of view makes of such provocative juxtapositions a space of ethical possibility.

[180] On the perhaps counterintuitive nature of violence, privilege and exclusion in the modern world, see for example, Zygmunt Bauman, *Culture in a Liquid Modern World*, trans. Lydia Bauman (Cambridge, U.K. ; Malden, Mass. : [Warsaw]: Polity ; National Audiovisual Institute, 2011). Bauman also writes more directly to issues of social inequality in Zygmunt Bauman, *Collateral Damage: Social Inequalities in a Global Age* (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2011). On the reception of Hannah Arendt in the Arabic-speaking world in light of the Arab spring, see Jens Hanssen, "Reading Hannah Arendt in the Middle East: Preliminary Observations on Totalitarianism, Revolution and Dissent," *Orient-Institut Studies* 1 (2012), http://www.perspectivia.net/content/publikationen/orient-institut-studies/1-2012/hanssen_hannah-arendt.

Provocative Juxtapositions as Spaces of Ethical Possibility

One such provocative juxtaposition is Joseph's brief exchange with a Yiddish-speaking German prostitute. When Joseph's respected German cloth supplier curtails their business relationship on account of the Nuremberg laws, it is a lowly German prostitute, "a fair-haired woman with a painted face lean[ing] against the door of a hotel" (Hoffmann 53) who makes up for it. Her fair hair alludes to her positionality as the stereotypical Aryan. Yet her intermediate location in the hotel doorway, along with her double-layered face, suggests a certain degree of duality, a willingness to find the breaches in the wall, and the ability to make herself porous to otherness. She thus solicits Joseph with the German *komm*, and when he doesn't raise his head, she empathically whispers the same word in its Yiddish pronunciation, *kimm*. At this, Joseph looks up and smiles, their faces meeting in mutual sight and recognition. For with this slight shift in pronunciation, she signals her empathic concern for Joseph's social and economic isolation, as well as her willingness to flout the law of the land, both by doing business with him, and by doing The Business with him. Furthermore, by speaking Yiddish, by pronouncing the "degenerate dialect"[181] upon her own lips, her utterance pierces the newly consecrated German-Jewish boundary, to share both Joseph's phonetics and his affective matrix. She recognizes his humanity as a Jew, while he recognizes her humanity as a prostitute.[182] Both characters evince affective

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[181] I use this phrase ironically. Nazism and Hebraism agreed upon the "inferior" nature of Yiddish. *See* "Nazis Join Hebraists in Cultural Assault on Yiddish Tongue" (London: Jewish Telegraph Agency, April 30, 1933), http://www.jta.org/1933/04/30/archive/nazis-join-hebraists-in-cultural-assault-on-yiddish-tongue.

[182] Speaking in the dialect of another does not necessarily imply empathic concern; it can also signal a threat. The infiltration of Soviet villages by Yiddish-speaking Gestapo agents is a germane counterpoint, not to mention Arabic-speaking Jews sent to infiltrate Palestinian and other Arab communities. *See* "Gestapo Disguises Nazis As Yiddish-Speaking Red Armymen to Spy on Russian Jews" (Jewish Telegraph Agency, May 14, 1943), http://www.jta.org/1943/05/14/archive/gestapo-disguises-nazis-as-yiddish-speaking-red-armymen-to-spy-on-russian-jews.

porousness; their intersubjective exchange across linguistic lines redeems and enchants at the same time as it evokes the unforgiving political circumstances that make of this chastened simple exchange a form of transgression to begin with.

In the same vein, Asouf, like Joseph, also experiences moments where the boundaries between his porous self and similarly porous ethnolinguistic others give way to experiences of chastened intersubjectivity. Asouf is struck, indeed, deeply *affected*, by one "white-haired Italian expert" (al-Koni 75), who rather than shoot a pregnant gazelle, instead raises his binoculars to behold the wonder of the sight. Although this expert, or "Christian" as Asouf refers to him, arrives in a modern Land Rover just like the insatiable hunters, the way he comports himself in the caves reveals that like Asouf, his body is able to feel with the desert. The Italian Christian expert's "tremble" (al-Koni 76) as they gently trace the cave paintings, using his handkerchief to carefully wipe away the dust from ancient faces inscribed in the rock; he feels with the desert, and with its populations, modern and ancient, animal and human, at one and the same time. Asouf watches approvingly as the Italian sways from side to side, "in his eyes a humble submission like that of a Muslim when he prays" (al-Koni 76). By seeing in the gestures of this desert-respecting Christian those of a praying Muslim, Asouf contracts the interpersonal space between them, seeing the movement of the self in the other and the movement of the other in the self, evoking Vittorio Gallese's mirror neurons.[183] Like the German prostitute who calls out *kimm*, Asouf is ascribing to this Christian a similarly generous boundary crossing gesture toward intersubjectivity. Yet, in this moment in the cave, neither Asouf nor the

[183] On mirror neurons, *see* Gallese and Wojciehowski, "How Stories Make Us Feel: Toward an Embodied Narratology"; Hickok, *The Myth of Mirror Neurons*.

Italian is carried away by his sense of oneness with the world beyond the self. For Asouf, the memory of his abuse at the hands of the heavily armed Italian captain who had pressed him into military surface remains salient; this one man may love the desert, but the desert is still at risk. Similarly, for the Italian, the ecstasy and enchantment of feeling with the desert animals and with exquisite cave paintings is somehow tempered, for "his eyes are at times overcome by a touch of sadness."[184] Both Asouf and the Italian feel intersubjectively, but never absolutely so; it is an intersubjectivity chastened.

Notably, epigraphs and intertexts aside, the passage in which Asouf observes the Italian Christian expert is the first and only time in the text that suggests that the Tuareg Asouf is Muslim. Thus, the implication of his intersubjectively seeing his [Muslim] self in the [Christian] Italian is that his interaction with Cain and Asouf is to a certain extent one of shared intergroup belonging, yet fraught with affective misalignment and blockage.[185]Affectively, Asouf is more aligned with the porous-of-feeling Christian who loves and empathizes with the desert than with the rapacious, affectively impervious hunters who on the surface happen to share his religious creed.

Sefer Yosef further strengthens the notion that communities of sentiment organized along affective lines precede the ethnolinguistic. For in addition to the aforementioned Yiddish-speaking German prostitute, the text crafts Herr Sill, German tobacco seller on

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[184] al-Koni 76 in the English; al-Koni 86 in the Arabic. The Arabic reads, " wa-qad taghzū muqlatayhi masḥat kāba". I have modified Tingley and and Jayyusi's translation here to reflect the sense of touch present in the word *masḥa* and the sense of puncture and aggression suggested by the word *taghzū*.

[185] Granted, as a Tuareg desert dweller, Asouf also stands apart from Cain and Masoud. On the question of Tuareg group affiliation, *see* Jeremy Keenan, *The Lesser Gods of the Sahara: Social Change and Contested Terrain amongst the Tuareg of Algeria*, Cass Series--History and Society in the Islamic World (London ; Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2004), http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://www.netLibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=116142.

Friedrichstrasse, as a porous body, electrified by the potential for violence latent in the impervious, imposing frame of Siegfried, his fellow German.

Herr Sill's interactions with Siegfried start with the act of *seeing*; he "sees what he sees" (Hoffmann 74) and it is being *affected* by his vision that causes his heart to first fill with a sense of dread. So affected is Sill that he must look away as he physically hands the cigarettes to Siegfried. From the act of seeing, to being affected, which in turn elicits a turning away, Sill diagnoses that the impending disaster "must have its origins at the dawn of history." (Hoffmann 75) From the dawn of history to Berlin under Nazi rule, porousness and imperviousness know no political boundaries, even as they coalesce momentarily behind the banner of one movement, tribe or nation. The lyrical cadence of the interrogatives Sill poses to Siegfried in an attempt to pierce his apathetic outer shell is met with the flat counterpoint of Siegfried's "Na, Yah" in his refusal (Hoffmann 76), or perhaps his incapacity, to yield. As Herr Sill's finds that evoking the magisterial reverberations of thunder between mountain and valley near his ancestral village make no impression of Siegfried's countenance, he himself is further *affected*. The dread that had taken root in Herr Sill's heart now spreads to his chest (Hoffmann 75), on it is on the heels of this dread that Siegfried's impervious body comes full circle from having stared at the gold down on his infantile legs in his youth (Hoffmann 1). Now, in Herr Sill's mind's eye, Siegfried's physical form is revealed as the reptilian Basilisk, a foot-long, dragon-like mythical creature that from Pliny to Shakespeare has been known as the most lethal of all beasts. [186]

[186] This and all further factual information on the history of the Basilisk as symbol is from Michael Ferber, "Basilisk," *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols* (Albany: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

As a reptile, dermis encased in impervious keratin scales, the Basilisk evokes the ultimate embodiment of the imperviousness that simultaneously rebuffs and plants foreboding dread within the body of Herr Sill. Furthermore, in the image of the Basilisk, the act of sight is co-opted; for unlike Herr Sill, who is *affected* when he sets his eyes upon Siegfried, the Basilisk uses its sight, indeed a single glance, to cut short the sight and the lives of others. Literary allusions here to Isaiah 11, where the child's hand over the basiliks' nest gives way to images of children joining with the feared best in play once the age of the Messiah has dawned, give way here to Basilisk himself and the similarly reptilian "holy iguana" (Hoffmann 77) as champions of the carnivorous.

Meanwhile, as Siegfried becomes his most impervious, bloodthirsty, reptilian self, Joseph enters a space of free-floating prose-poetry, where he himself floats in the sea. He consummates his love for Miriam by making his body supremely porous, exiting the human realm and transforming into a male seahorse. In this guise, Joseph not only accepts the egg within his mouth, within own tissue of blood vessels; his heart also beats *through* his skin, and the embryo itself is translucent. While the image of the Basilisk and its scales magnify Siegfried's imperviousness, the image of Joseph as male seahorse in a sexual role reversal embraces porousness to the extreme. The text thus heightens the contrast between these two affective states just as the fateful events of Kristallnacht are about to erupt upon the page.

The affective imperviousness of Siegfried, Cain and Masoud serves a dual function: serves as metonymy for larger 20th century political forces, and it also heightens the sense of relief, enchantment and mournfulness born of the fleeting moments of chastened intersubjectivity. Asouf's intersubjective experiences with the *waddan* reconfigure his

affective matrix, turning him away from meat and consumption, and *towards* his own family history. Through the *waddan*, he transcends his desire for animal flesh by himself coming to feel with the *waddans* and gazelles; and through magical realist slight of hand, Asouf literary *becomes animal*. Indeed, as a *waddan* he had been hunting saves him from certain death by sending a rope down to pry Asouf up over a ledge from which he had been hanging for countless hours, teetering between life and death, past and future both hit Asouf with the force of nature, collapsing all boundaries:

> He closed his eyes, then opened them again, a number of times, then focused at last on the patient phantom. He saw some of its features. Oh, God! It was the *waddan*! The same *waddan.* His victim and executioner. But which of them was the victim, which the executioner? Which of them was human, which was animal? [...] Suddenly, in the dimness of the glow, he saw his father in the eyes of the great, patient *waddan*. The said, benevolent eyes of his father, who'd never understood why man should harm his brother man, who'd fled to the desert, choosing to die alone in the mountains rather than return to men. The eyes that had chosen a cruel freedom without ever quite knowing why. From his place, covered with its greedy stones, he cried out in a choked voice, as if communing with his God. 'You're my father. I recognized you. Wait. I want to tell you--' He lost consciousness (al-Koni 60-61).

Asouf is thus born anew; he is born as himself, his father, and *waddan* all at one and the same time. Meat now disgusts him; the mere smell wafting towards him from his mother's oven on his way home is enough to make him feel "dizzy and nauseous, [to] retch [...] repeatedly before finally arriving home" (al-Koni 65). He intuits that there is no difference between the meat of animals and that of man, and rightfully so, now that he feels both his body and his lineage to be man and animal at the same time: "Had his father come to dwell in the *waddan*, and the *waddan* in his father? He, his father and the mighty *waddan* were one now. Nothing could separate them" (al-Koni 65-66). And notably, here Elmarsafy identifies an internal debate within the text as to between whether or not God can inhabit any of his creatures, as in the Sufi doctrine of *ḥulūl*, or if incarnation is limited to Christ, as

in Pauline Christianity (Elmarsafy 1, 110-117). In this way, the mystical and the ecumenical merge to foreground chastened intersubjectivity in this central passage of the novel.

Asouf's affective and intersubjective alignment with the *waddan* and concomitant change to an "effeminate" vegetarian diet (al-Koni 65-66) lead Asouf to eschew not only hunting, but also to liberate himself from the physical boundaries of the human body altogether. It is as if by giving up the impulse to consume, he in turn is spared *being* consumed. Indeed, in Asouf's magical escape from the Italians, people of the Oasis saw a miracle for the first time in their lives, a miracle they still recount:

> They'd seen a man break loose from his captivity and change into a *waddan*, then run off toward the mountains, bounding over the rocks like the wind, heedless of the bullets flying all around him. Had anyone ever seen a man transformed into a *waddan*? [...]That evening [the wise Oasis Sufis] went to the Sufi mosque and celebrated a *dhikr* through the night in praise of God and in homage to the saint, filled with joy that the divine spirit should have come to dwell in a wretched creature of this world (al-Koni 74).

Although Asouf has been marked as effeminate by his vegetarianism, here he is revealed in his transformation as mighty, powerful, and blessed by God; the miracle of Asouf's escape thus complicates the gendering of Asouf's turn away from the consumptive practices of the human world. What formerly seemed to divest him of his masculinity now casts him as heroically anointed, thus confounding the assumed gender binaries of empathic affect.

In their readings of *Nazif al-Hajar*, both Ghazoul and Marsafy foreground mystical interconnection as inherently Sufi; Ghazoul, however, emphasizes the significance of the passage above, concerning the Italian Christian expert, while Elmarsafy overlooks it. Ghazoul argues that the novel attempts to arrive at "the common spiritual root" of humanity, articulating the unity of people, both with animals and with one another (Ghazoul 32-22); Elmarsafy, on the other hand, emphasizes traffic between human and

animal over the (human) intergroup component as "enabl[ing] an ethics and an epistemology that seeks to overcome the Kantian impasse [so that] non-human things in themselves can be known, but that knowledge comes at the price of a more generalized, rational knowledge of the world" (Elmarsafy, 112). This reading of chastened intersubjectivity in al-Koni follows Elmarsafy in considering how al-Koni seeks to break through the impasse; however, Ghazoul's foregrounding of the exchanges not only between humans and animals, but between humans and other *humans*, is what enables the comparative reading at hand, weaving together 1930s Jewish Berlin and the Tuareg Sahara.

Asouf's intersubjective feeling with and magical, intercorporeal transformation into a *waddan* is the culmination of porousness in *Nazif al-Hajar*. In *Sefer Yosef*, porousness continuously culminates, recedes and culminates again via the diaphanous curtain of Hoffmann's sparkling avant-garde prose. While Hoffmann's characters don't transform like Asouf, they do redirect the reader's attention in the most lyrical of ways; this redirecting creates the sense of transformation, if not of the body itself, then of the spatial and historical matrix in which it is embedded. For example, in light of Rothberg's notion of the child as a site of multidirectional memory, the recurrence of sweetness and sweets as motif suggests the ways in which childlike patience and playfulness can redirect the affective flow of an otherwise bitter memory, whether personal, historical or both. Heinrich Rindfleisch, distinguished professor of science, is the opposite of childlike: he is oriented towards the cultivation of empirical knowledge and rational hypotheses. He cruelly tortures living creatures in the name of science and progress. When he removes all of a captured bat's senses, first by covering its head, then by sealing its nostrils with wax, then by extracting its eyes and cutting off its ears (Hoffmann 56), it is as if he reifies his own

impermeability to the physical pain of other beings. His dreams as recounted in the text (Hoffmann 56-57) are orderly, sedate, and completely devoid of feeling. Thus, when the Professor recruits Joseph and Yingele to have their facial features measured in real time in front of a university lecture on eugenics and degenerate forms, the exercise evinces a stark and uneasy juxtaposition of respectability and horror. The impervious body of the Professor says it all when Joseph's beard impedes the movement of the caliper; he equanimous Professor's face is suddenly "suffused with anger" (Hoffmann 57). Joseph, however, evinces an intuitive understanding of the ugliness of what has just transpired; when Yingele inquires, Joseph defers. Rather than end the lecture with another lecture, thus reinforcing the ascendant narrative of Nazi eugenics, Joseph instead redirects the flow of the narrative by changing the subject: he invites Yingele to purchase a sweet of his choice with some of the money they have politely been paid. Joseph acts upon a certain feeling in the air after the lecture to completely change the subject in the most childlike, lyrical of ways; the cloud does not dissipate, but it is at least held at bay for the time it takes for Yingele's raisin cake to melt in his mouth.

Thus, the interpellation of the intersubjective into the porous, interspersed among bouts of imperviousness, marks the intersubjective as ethical response. Thus, both texts flip Sara Ahmed's typology of affect, which equates softness with vulnerability, and firmness with defensibility.[187] In the aforementioned characterizations, it is the softness, openness and porousness of Asouf, Joseph, and Yingele that enables an ethical engagement with others and with otherness, allowing for a humble awareness and fluidity with the natural

[187] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Second edition (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 1–3.

world. Alternatively, hardness, and its natural consequence, the state of imperviousness as evinced by Cain and Siegfried, serve as harbinger of genocide and annihilation.

Thus, reading al-Koni and Hoffmann comparatively in light of power and powerlessness, porousness and impermeability helps deconstruct Western-postcolonial, tradition-modernity binaries present in some critical readings, especially of *Nazif al-Hajar*. For Allen, the central conflict in the text between Asouf and Qabil serves as an "allegory of the clash between tradition and modernity" (Allen 249), while Hartmut Fähndrich, who in his reading emphasizes the centrality of the desert, agrees, noting that "a deep conviction as to the unity of the universe underpins [al-Koni's] oeuvre, and any violation of this unity is presented as a grave crime" (Fähndrich 334). For Cooke, the magical realist *Nazif al-Hajar* "enact[s] a postcolonial politics of resistance and contestation," (12) forming Deleuzian assemblages in order to express the history of "minoritarian groups" (13). Yet, her reliance on the binary narrative of "A native Libyan fighting Western hegemony and its representatives to seek to rescue those threatened with annihilation" (20) assumes a monolithic "West" that is eternal aggressor. Yet what of the fissures of this so-called West, with its indigenous minority groups and internal grappling with the consequences of modernization? For this "West" of which Cooke writes is also the meek Italian pilgrim in whom Asouf sees himself; it is also Joseph, Yingele, and the German prostitute of *Sefer Yosef*; it is also al-Koni himself, residing in Switzerland and taking in the majesty of the Alps. Indeed, Asouf's battle against Qabil for the sake of preservation of both himself and desert environment, is not so much a battle against the "West" as much as it is a battle against those who could greedily consume and recklessly destroy all of the earth's riches, and a battle in defense of those who in their moments of self-restraint, humility and

affective porousness would preserve a space for wonder. The comparative reading thus helps shift from monolithic notions of "East" and "West" to porousness and impermeability as a matrix of affective traffic signals on a global scale. Furthermore, while a comparative reading of al-Koni and Hoffmann calls into question the tradition-modernity binary, it also reveals al-Koni's desert and Hoffmann's 1930's Berlin as already interwoven.

In the push and pull between porousness and impermeability, both texts are illuminated by the coming trauma. In *Sefer Yosef*, it is Kristallnacht, while in *Nazif al-Hajar* it is the crucifixion of Asouf and the fulfillment of an ancient Tuareg prophecy of resistance. Both traumas mark the ultimate practical indefensibility of affective porousness, and the ultimate ethical indefensibility of anything but.

Kristallnacht as historical trauma is in turn articulated as the work of two "two yellow-haired, blue-eyed gods cross[ing] in a celestial lane," who seek to "spread fine crystal glass" (77) over a multitude of German cities that become reflected (*mishtakfim*)[188] in the impending sea of blood. Their success is described in the language of culture and aesthetics: "the crystal reddens," as if Kristallnacht were a work of art and not a murderous spree. As Siegfried and such "yellow-haired gods" prepare their clubs and imbibe their fill, Joseph, Yingele's father, sews. He sews, reciting a version of Psalm 23, in which God, too, sews. Here Hoffmann interweaves sewing imagery that evokes the beginning of S. Y. Agnon's *Agunot*: "A thread of grace is spun and drawn out of the deeds of Israel, and the

[188] In Levenston and Treister's translation, *mishtakfim* is translated as, "become visible." I have changed it to "become reflected" to highlight the reflexive nature of the *hitpa'el* verb and emphasize the reciprocal relationship between the cities and the blood in which they are being bathed. Additionally, it should be noted that the text employs the masculine form of the verb even though cities in Hebrew, even foreign ones, are feminine. The language thus suggests the cities not literally as cities, but rather as aesthetic objects *in situ*.

Holy One, blessed by He, Himself, in His glory, sits and weaves--strand on strand--a tallit all grace and all mercy, for the Congregation of Israel to deck herself in."[189]

> Joseph Silverman sews, surely goodness and mercy, he sews, shall follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord, he sews, forever [...]
> Siegfried raised the club and hit Yingele's head, a single blow. From the force of that blow, Yingele's skull caved in and a bone splinter like a knife split Yingele's brain in that place where the dreams reside. And when Joseph saw the blood from Yingele's head streaming down his face, his heart broke.
> As for the rest, it is already written in the history books that Joseph was left up there, alone, and said, 'Mayn Got, mayn got, farvos hastu mikh farlozn!'[190] and died.
> Siegfried raised the club for the second time and hit Joseph on the chest, a single blow. And from the force of that blow, Joseph's heart of flesh also split. 'Na,' Siegfried thought, 'Im already quite good with a club' (Hoffmann 78-79).

Here, in the murder of Joseph and Yingele at Siegfried's hands, the double meaning of Joseph's recitation and rewriting of Psalm 23, recited both at funerals and at the end of the Jewish Sabbath, comes to the fore. Indeed, the recitation evokes an impending funeral, but it also expresses a hope for a reunification with God and a return to sacred time.

This sacred time is in turn glimpsed through the return of a throng murdered Jews, as boisterous and endearing as ever, return in honor of the same German drunkard who taught Yingele the nonsensical song about meatballs and knocks-at-the-door. This drunkard who had spent his days loitering in front of a Kosher butcher shop and charming Jewish children, occupies the margins of Aryan society, much like the Yiddish-speaking prostitute. He exhibits a degree of sensitivity and affective porousness that causes him to feel "horrified," to be "seized with longing," and for "his heart [to be] filled with sadness" (Hoffmann 79-80) Notably, his sadness renders porous the passage between this life and

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[189] Shmuel Yosef Agnon, "Agunot," in *A Book That Was Lost: Thirty Five Stories*, ed. Alan L. Mintz and Anne Golomb Hoffman, trans. Baruch Hochman, Expanded ed., Toby ed (New Milford, CT: The Toby Press, 2008), 39; Shmuel Yosef 'Agnon, "'Agunot," in *Elu V'elu* (Yerushalayim: Shocken, 1998), 329. Translation from the Mintz and Golomb anthology in which Agunot seems to have been translated by Ammiel Gurt.

[190] Yiddish - "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" [provided with the English translation]

the next, ascending "aloft to the upper worlds" where it startles the departed Jews, who in turn declare this German's sorrow "incredible." For even though his sadness "gave off the smell of wine," it nevertheless manages to briefly summon the dead, who return briefly "to gladden the drunkard's heart and they were, for the last time, for him alone, what they had been while they lived" (Hoffmann 80). In this case, death does not extinguish the connections made possibly by affective porousness; for Kristallnacht's victims return, crossing both ethnolinguistic and metaphysical boundaries, simultaneously haunting and consoling the singer of the profound song of the meatballs.

In a similarly violent death, Asouf is ultimately crucified and clubbed to death by Cain after purposefully misleading him in his attempts to hunt the last remaining *waddan.* Yet, this violent ending, rather than harken the victory of Cain and the death of any future communion between man and nature, instead portends the revenge of nature via the activation of an ancient Tuareg prophecy with the dripping of the blood of Asouf-as-*waddan* upon the stone (134-135). In opening himself to intersubjectively feeling with, and intercorporeally merging with the living creatures of the desert, Asouf completes his bildung as affectively porous heroic figure, able to resist valiantly. When his severed head speaks, his lips moving but the head otherwise still, its haunting words set the stage for the cleaning of the desert that is to come: "Only through dust will the son of Adam be filled" (al-Koni 135). Affective porousness here, as in the case of the Jews returned to gladden the heart of the German drunkard, moves freely between life and death; and as in the case of Hanan al-Shakyh's Zahra, the sacrifice of the affectively porous gestures towards the future restoration of a latent empathy in the bodies and spaces presently impervious.

Conclusion

Both novels considered here, Yoel Hoffmann's *Sefer Yosef* and Ibrahim al-Koni's *Nazif al-Hajar*, craft an intergroup poetics of intergroup porousness and impermeability in order to simultaneously reinforce and transcend ethnolinguistic group affiliations. Evoking the pathos of Benjamin's Angel of History, affectively porous characters feel with the material and spiritual worlds around them via a chastened intersubjectivity that both acknowledges and resists the dark side of 20th century technological progress. Whether through Hoffmann's lyrical realism, or al-Koni's magical realism, both texts seek to recover a form of enchantment while soberly, and at times mockingly maintaining the discursive authority of empirically, rationally minded observer of historical events. Spiritual ecstasy and enlightenment in both texts, whether via successful meditation upon the Buddhist *kōan* or through the intersubjective, intercorporeal experience of Sufi *ḥulūl*, suggests a response to the Kantian impasse, gesturing towards the embodiment of a non-logocentric, non-egocentric mode of being. Ultimately, the comparative reading of these two linguistically and geographically distinct iterations of the intergroup poetics of affective porousness and impermeability serves to further complicate binaries of East and West, and tradition and modernity.

Chapter Three:
Filiation as Promise and Peril:
Ambivalent Intersubjectivity in Shira Geffen's *Boreg (Self Made)* and Saʿūd al-Sanʿusi's *Sāq al-Bambū (The Bamboo Stalk)*

Establishing a Comparative Framework

Thus far, the previous two chapters have considered the affects of empathy in the context of novels; however, in the present cultural moment, no consideration of empathy would be complete without some engagement with film. Indeed, the comparison of a novel and a film in the context of an inquiry into the aesthetic of intersubjectivity and intercorporeality is not only a natural step, but also a necessary one. Given the shared ethical turn of film and literature, as well as new research partnerships between humanists and neuroscientists that seek a nuanced, interdisciplinary understanding of intersubjectivity and empathy, such a comparison is not only a natural step, but a necessary one. As Asbjorn Gronstad notes, ethics has played an increasingly visible role in recent years insofar as "the ethical turn in literature provides fertile ground for the subsequent interest in ethical issues in film and the visual arts;"[191] the latter, however, seeks to theorize an ethical content that is inspired by, yet nevertheless distinct from "language-based ethics."[192] Furthermore, Vittorio Gallese and Michele Guerra, an example of a neuroscientist-humanist team, suggest that film is a powerful as a genre because it draws upon experiences of intersubjectivity as enabled by the mirror neuron mechanism; indeed, they argue that the mechanism of Embodied Simulation posits an "implicitly and pre-

[191] Asbjorn Gronstad, *Film and the Ethical Imagination* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 39, http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=http://link.springer.com/10.1057/978-1-137-58374-1.
[192] Ibid., 3.

reflective level of intercorporeality."[193] In other words, given the specific and empirical materialities of the brain's pathways, film is the genre *par excellence* for questions of intersubjectivity. This is why Gal Raz and Telma Hendler can write of a "neurocinematically informed model of empathy."[194] Thus, in this analysis, a film that strategically employs the exchange of place to gesture towards the intercorporeal is considered alongside a novel that charts similar yet distinct aesthetic moves; incidentally, this novel has also been adapted into an on-screen television series. Intercorporeality is thus the starting point that imbricates both film and novel in the ethical possibilities and limits of Embodied Simulation.

In Israeli director Shira Geffen's film *Boreg* (*Self Made*) and Kuwaiti novelist Saʿūd al-Sanʿusi's *Sāq al-Bambū* (*The Bamboo Stalk*), inhabiting the physicality of an other serves as a central aesthetic device for mapping the contours of an ethics of filiation. Both works craft a poetics of intertwined bodies and physicalities in order to yoke together seemingly disparate genealogies that in turn come to possess a shared horizon of possibilities. The works similarly depict this horizon as simultaneously accessed and blocked by *interlanguage*, or the always in-progress aspect of the task of learning a foreign language and its culture. This shared horizon may inspire hopefulness, but it simultaneously may inspire fear, disgust, unease and despair. The result is thus an ambivalent intersubjectivity, where characters must grapple with the ethics of a filiation they did not choose and that they cannot escape. While philosophical and now neuroscientific debates concerning the

[193] Vittorio Gallese and Michele Guerra, "Embodying Movies: Embodied Simulation and Film Studies," *Cinema* 3 (2012): 191.
[194] Gal Raz and Talma Hendler, "Forking Cinematic Paths to the Self: Neurocinematically Informed Model of Empathy in Motion Pictures," *Projections; New York* 8, no. 2 (Winter 2014): 89–114.

intersubjective have fixated on the extent to which it is affective or cognitive, on the one hand, and fact or fantasy, on the other, here the notion of an *ambivalent intersubjectivity* creates the critical space to articulate the uncertainty in the steps of the body on the move in an unmoored and quickly changing world.

Levinas defines filiation as "the fact of seeing the possibilities of the other as your own possibilities, of being able to escape the closure of your identity and what is bestowed upon you, towards something which is not bestowed upon you and which nevertheless is yours."[195] For Levinas, the relationship of filiation, although shaped by the biological relationship between parent and child, transcends its initial form to govern non-familial relationships that nevertheless fulfill the conditions of the escape of one's own subjectivity into a realm of mutual possibility. According to Levinas, the bonds of filiation occur not through the mechanism of "sympathy," through empirical knowledge of the existence of the other, but rather, through a preexisting type of "pluralist existing."[196]

From here, the chapter will proceed as follows. First, it will map the plot of basic contours of plot and setting of both works; then, it will provide further background information on the biography, style, and criticism as relates to each work. From there, it will establish the protagonists of each work as possessing ethical subjectivities, embodied within porous corporealities. Next, it will introduce Derrida's notion of *hospitality* as a key term of analysis alongside the aforementioned filiation of Levinas. It will further point to the implicit notion of intercorporeality found in Derrida's *paradox* of hospitality to

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[195] Emmanuel Lévinas and Philippe Nemo, *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 70. Judith Butler develops a different notion of alternate kinship, which is concerned with rendering visible loves and losses that do not conform to traditional hetero-normative social or legal practice. *See* Butler, *Antigone's Claim*.
[196] Lévinas and Nemo, *Ethics and Infinity*, 72.

elaborate upon Levinas' notion of the shared horizon of possibility; while this shared horizon is the upshot of filiation, it is predicated upon the bonds of mutual responsibility rather than upon the sort of hope or optimism that the word *horizon* often implies. Lastly, it will consider *interlanguage*, a term from the field of language pedagogy, in order to probe the ambivalences present within the newfound bonds of filiation both works place upon their characters, as well as within the spaces of multidirectional memory they craft.

Basic Contours

Sāq al-Bambū (The Bamboo Stalk, henceforth *Bamboo)*, published in 2012, awarded the International Prize for Arabic Fiction in 2013, and adapted to a Ramadan television series in 2016, confronts a number of long-standing taboos in Kuwaiti society: the treatment of non-citizen guest workers, of children born of illicit Kuwaiti-guest worker unions, and of the *Bidūn*, Kuwaitis without citizenship.[197] The novel presents itself as the memoirs-in-translation of Jose/'Isa, son of Kuwaiti writer and intellectual Rashid Tarouf, and the Tarouf family's Filipina maid, Josephine Mendoza. Raised by his mother's family in the Philippines, Jose returns to Kuwait as a young man to claim his patrimony as a Kuwaiti citizen and as a biological son of the Tarouf family. As Jose/'Isa explains, his dual name belies his dual provenance. And although his name was a source of disagreement for his parents, he purports to be indifferent to nomenclature per se, noting, "my problem isn't

[197] On the exclusions inherent in the construction of contemporary tribal identities throughout the Arab Gulf, *see* Miriam Cooke, *Tribal Modern: Branding New Nations in the Arab Gulf* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

really with names but with what lies behind them."[198] Since Jose knows only a few words of Arabic, he must communicate with his Kuwaiti kin mostly in English; his memoir is thus framed as a translation from Tagalog to Arabic. Between Jose's translator -- a Filipino Muslim acquaintance named Ibrahim Salam, and his editor -- his Kuwaiti half-sister, Khawla Rashid, Jose's materiality is modulated for a Kuwaiti sphere unwillingly confronted by his existence yet unable to look away.

Similarly concerned with the modulation of physicality, Shira Geffen's film *Boreg (Self Made, lit. "A Hardware Screw")*, released in 2007 and winner of the Cannes Camera d'Or, follows the tangencies and ultimate intersection between the lives of two emotionally disengaged women. The first, Michal Kayyam, is a famous Jewish Israeli conceptual artist who is struck with a form of amnesia after her bed collapses out from under her, hurling her to the ground and delivering a blow to the head. The iciness of her relationship with her tech entrepreneur husband, who summarily offers to drive her to the doctor on his way to the airport, does little to help her work her coffee maker or recall any details of her life. Spectator and leading lady alike thus slowly and jointly piece together the details of Michal's life. First there is the revelation of her name and status, followed by her ill-fated attempts to assemble a new, equally shoddy bed from Ikea-like *Etaca*. The feminist art for which she has earned such fame is revealed as horrifyingly life-negating; Michal herself comes into view not only as a confused amnesiac, but as disconnected from feeling altogether. Nadine Nasrallah, on the other hand, is a Palestinian woman who crosses a

[198] The quotations from the novel are from Jonathan Wright's translation except where noted; where my interpretation differs from Wright's, I give the citation for both Arabic original and English translation. Saud Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, trans. Jonathan Wright (Doha, Qatar: Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation Publishing, 2015), 3.

checkpoint into Israel each day for her job packing screws into little bags for the self-same *Etaca*; those around her describe her as special (*ghiyr shikl*), as not right in the head. Although unlike Michal, Nadine has not received any sort of corporeal blow, she nevertheless exhibits a similar type of emotional disconnection from those around her. However, whereas Michal is inflected by her bizarre and troubling art installations, Nadine is characterized in far more playful manner. She dances to Arabic hip-hop music, blaring through bright pink headphones as she crosses the threshold of her family home and the bars of the checkpoint. She loves a picture of the beach hanging in her handsome neighbor's home, and she desperately wants to be a mother. The women's lives first intersect when Michal's call to *Etaca* to complain about a missing screw sets in motion a chain of events that ultimately leads to Nadine losing her job. Ultimately, a surreal mix-up at the checkpoint causes the two women to exchange places, each stepping seamlessly into the life of the other. While the two women are themselves indifferent to the switch, and even seem to feel more at ease on the other side of the Green Line, their switch is nevertheless crafted in the film as a gesture towards filiation.

Although they differ both in genre and in style, *Boreg* and *Bamboo* are two recent works that have been considered iconoclastic in their respective cultural spheres for their thematizations of otherness. Both are the product of young artists who have been recognized both nationally and internationally. Shira Geffen, born in 1971, comes from a well-known family of cultural icons, including her songwriter and poet father, Yehonatan Geffen, actress mother Nurit Geffen, and singer brother, Aviv Geffen. Her 2007 film *Meduzot* (*Jellyfish*) which she co-directed with her husband, the highly acclaimed writer Etgar Keret, traces the intersecting lives of three women, including Joy, a Filipina guest worker who in

the absence of any significant knowledge of Hebrew, struggles to communicate with her Israeli employer.[199] *Boreg* follows *Meduzot* in its surreal style and focus on the marginalized (the same actress, Sarah Adler, also features in both). Furthermore, the comparison with *Bamboo* brings *Meduzot*'s Filipina guest-worker character, Joy, to the fore. As some critics have noted, the film's slow-moving, absurd sequences evoke the work of Palestinian filmmaker Elia Suleiman, as well as French director Emmanuel Carrère.[200]

Ella Shohat as advocated a criticism of Israeli cinema that considers how plot, setting and stylistic innovations buttress and/or critique the Zionist narrative. As she notes, "Israeli films are necessarily and intensely political, including, and perhaps even especially, those films which claim not to be," given that the creation of the Israeli State is the "result of the enactment of an explicit political Zionism" whose ethics Israeli society continues to debate.[201] In this vein, films referred to as "shooting and crying films,"[202] recent examples of which include Ari Folman's *Waltz with Bashir* (2008) or Samuel Maoz's *Lebanon* (2009), are seen to privilege the internal conflicts of the Zionist soldier-perpetrator, depicting him as a "moral soldier, a victim of circumstances, forced to act

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[199] In addition to winning the Camera d'Or at the 2007 Cannes film festival for best first feature film, it also garnered a number of nominations in the 2007 Israeli Academy Awards, including Best Director, Best Screenplay, and Best Film. *See* "Jellyfish - Festivals and Awards | Israeli Film Database | Israel Film Center," accessed July 21, 2017, http://www.israelfilmcenter.org/israeli-film-database/films/jellyfish/awards.

[200] Emmanuel Raspiengeas, "Self Made/Boreg," *Positif; Paris*, September 2015. [French]

[201] Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation*, Second edition (London ; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 5, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/lib/utxa/detail.action?docID=677064.

[202] As discussed in the Introduction, shooting and crying, or *yorim ve-bochim*, was a term that came into use during Israeli involvement in the Lebanese Civil War in 1982-1985 to describe a state where moral misgivings about the war, however deeply felt, did not prevent the soldier from shooting or the society from waging the war in the first place. Although the term only came into use in the 1980s, it applies equally to dynamics in Israeli culture, in film but also beyond, since 1948.

against his conscience."[203] *Boreg*, on the other hand, is not only a departure from this dynamic, or as Gadamer might say, this "shooting and crying" aesthetic, but also from overt aesthetics of perpetrator and victim altogether.[204] In this way, it is reminiscent of what Judd Ne'eman calls the "New Sensitivity movement,"[205] a movement whose admittedly less mainstream films "saw themselves as rebelling against the burden of commitment and collective reflection."[206] However, in line with Shohat's contention that Israeli cinema that seems to sidestep the political is still political, *Boreg*'s reception at the 31st Jerusalem Film Festival (2014) highlights the underling political stakes for the Israeli viewing public. At the festival, Geffen held an "emotional" press conference with seven other young filmmakers, reading a statement denouncing the war with Gaza that had begun a few days earlier, pleading that "Children living in Gaza are our partners in peace tomorrow."[207] As Nomi Sharron writes, this press conference in turn created the context in which the films, including *Boreg*, have been screened, both at the festival and beyond.[208]

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[203] Arguing against this stance, Gertz and Hermoni propose trauma as an alternative approach. *See* Nurith Gertz and Gal Hermoni, "The Muddy Path between Lebanon and Khirbet Khizeh: Trauma, Ethics and Redemption in Israeli Film and Literature," in *Just Images: Ethics and the Cinematic*, ed. Boaz Hagin et al. (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 35.

[204] Like Neta Alexander's notion of the New Violence movement in Israeli cinema, Boreg dispenses with the centrality of the narrative of the moral perpetrator. However, Boreg, unlike the New Violence films, does not dwell in the affects of senseless violence. *See* Neta Alexander, "A Body in Every Cellar: The 'New Violence' Movement in Israeli Cinema," *Jewish Film & New Media: An International Journal* 4, no. 1 (March 31, 2016): 12.

[205] Nurith Gertz, Orli Lubin, and Judd Ne'eman, eds., *Mabaṭim Fiḳṭiviyim: 'al Ḳolno'a Yiśre'eli* (Tel-Aviv: ha-Universiṭah ha-petuḥah, 1998), 9–33.

[206] Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation*, 185.

[207] Nomi Sharron, "Dancing Arabs and the Inability to Escape Reality: On the 31st Jerusalem International Film Festival," *Palestine - Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture; East Jerusalem* 19/20, no. 4/1 (2014): 174–79.

[208] This context was further strengthened by Geffen's insistence that attendees of her films stand for a moment of silence prior to each screening so that she could read the names of recent Gazan casualties. Ibid.

While little has been written about the film academically, popular critical opinion is divided between those who consider the film refreshing and "cliché-resistant,"[209] and those, including Haaretz film critic Orly Klein, who consider it pretentious and politically irresponsible.[210] Some critics have also noted the problematic imbalance between the two female protagonists,[211] an issue that shines a light on the perennial pitfalls and challenges depicting of an *other* alongside the self.

Prior to and alongside his literary career, Saʿūd al-Sanʿusī, born in 1981, has worked as a journalist. In addition to winning the IPAF (the Arabic "Booker") for *Bamboo*, he won the Laila Othman prize for his his first novel, *Sajīn al-marāyā (Prisoner of Mirrors)*, in 2010. His third novel, *Fi'rān ummī Hissa (Mother Hissa's Mice)* became a veritable sensation in Kuwait despite, or perhaps in part because of having been banned by government censors.[212] Although Sanʿusi traveled to the Philippines for multiple research trips in preparation for writing *Bamboo*, critical writing is nevertheless split on the extent to which the text succeeds in presenting a compelling, non-Orientalizing charater in Jose/'Isa.[213] Some consider the text a "daring adventure [*mughāmara jarīʾa*]"[214] that finds a way to

[209] Peter Debruge, "Film Review: 'Self Made,'" *Variety*, August 27, 2014, http://variety.com/2014/film/festivals/film-review-self-made-boreg-1201289462/.
[210] Orly Klein, "Shira gefen mitbareget ba-makom ha-lo nachon.," *Haaretz*, May 4, 2015, https://www.haaretz.co.il/gallery/cinema/movie-reviews/.premium-1.2628617.
[211] Ibid.; Hannah Brown, "Movie Review: 'Self Made' - Israel News - Jerusalem Post," April 28, 2015, http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Culture/Movie-Review-Self-Made-398771.
[212] al-Afī al-Shamarī, "Raqābat <<al-'i'lām>> Tamn'a Riwāyat <<fi'rān Ummī Hissa>>," *Jarīdat Al-Jarīa*, March 7, 2017, http://www.aljarida.com/articles/1462387760187950900/.
[213] One interesting exception is a reviewer from the Lebanese al-Nahhar, who avoided the question of ethnicity and group affiliation altogether, writing that the novel was about estrangement and fragmentation, all "under the mantle of individuals in crisis." Tajānī Husnā', "Hūwiyyat al-dhāt wa-ma'zaq al-ightirāb qirā'a fī riwāyat sāq al-bambū li-sa'ūd al-san'ūsī," *Majallat al-nahhār al-adabiyya*, accessed July 24, 2017, http://www.anhaar.com/ar/?p=4623.
[214] Maryām Habīl, "Qirā'a naqdīyya li-riwāyat sāq al-bambū," *al-Ayām*, April 26, 2014, http://www.alayam.com/alayam/Variety/284789/News.html.

address racism in Gulf societies from the point of view of the "master" [*sayyed*].[215] Others, however, maintain that al-San'ūsi did not go far enough; some read the novel as a "rejection of the other [*rafḍ al-ākhar*]" should he dare aspire to equality,[216] while others accused him of trying to safeguard the purity of Gulf society.[217] Academic writing on the novel echoes these concerns. Amna al-Ahbabi argues that the text is among the few novels from the Arab gulf that "provid[es] a deep and sometimes intimate view into the cultures from which [...] migrant domestic workers come [...] so that readers could live out [sic] and see life through their eyes."[218] Anne-Marie McManus, on the other hand, argues that the novel "forecloses its own critical horizon [by] produc[ing] an elitist and Orientalist essentialization of the Southwest Asian Other from within comparative scale."[219] Thus *Bamboo*, like *Boreg*, is not immune to critiques that it fails to fully develop, or worse, that it Orientalizes its *other*. Either way, it is clear that *Bamboo,* conceived within the context of empathy for an economically, legally, and vulnerable minority group *within* and yet simultaneously *beyond* Kuwaiti society, may have more in common with the aesthetic of *shooting and crying* than with *commitment*.

Curiously, the anxieties about the success and/or failure of each work to present characters read as the *other* in the creator's societies echo the standard back-and-forth of

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[215] Muhammad bin Muslim al-Mahri, "Sāq Al-Bambū Li-Sa'ū Al-Sanūsī: 'Indamā Tudīr Lī Al-Kuwayt Dhahrihā, Ahrub Ila Al-Filībīn!," *Al-Quds Al-'Arabī*, September 13, 2013, http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=85765.
[216] Rīm Ghanāyim, "al-Fardūs mafqūdān... al-Fardūs musta'ādān fī riwāyat sāq al-bambū," *Qadita.net*, March 13, 2013, http://www.qadita.net/featured/saq/.
[217] Dh. al-Kabīr al-dādīsī, "Riwayat sāq al-bambū: iskāt... tamyīz am khawf min mujtam'a hajīn?," *al-Ra'i al-yawm*, June 20, 2014, http://www.raialyoum.com/?p=108417.
[218] Amna Al Ahbabi, "Representation of Black Otherness in Khaleeji Literature" (Ph.D., Purdue University, 2014), 255, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/docview/1647472841/abstract/51CD71750EF7465BPQ/1.
[219] Anne-Marie E. McManus, "Scale in the Balance: Reading with the International Prize for Arabic Fiction ('the Arabic Booker')," *International Journal of Middle East Studies; Cambridge* 48, no. 2 (May 2016): 234, doi:http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/10.1017/S0020743816000039.

empathy studies of the Anglophone sphere: Does literary empathy help readers become better people, and/or does it unethically defang the political grievances of disenfranchised, oppressed others?[220] While these are undoubtedly important questions, the reading here seeks to consider parallel questions of affect. Indeed, by considering how the literary text crafts the affects of intersubjectivity and intercorporeality, this analysis seeks to chart the ambivalent contours of an ethics of filiation.[221]

Of Ethical Subjectivities and Porous Corporealities

José, Michal and Nadine are all established as ethical subjects with porous corporealities. Even where they reject or are rejected, they nevertheless invite a relational, Levinasian conception of the ethical. For Levinas, the human condition is "intrinsically social;" it is a space where "ethics is first philosophy," indeed the "self-grounded" foundation from which all other social life, and thus life itself, emanates.[222] The role of politics thus becomes not the limiting of war and aggression, per se, but rather, the limiting of man's infinite ethical obligation to others.[223] Although ethical subjectivities are crafted differently in *Boreg* and *Bamboo,* in both works they enable an affective porousness that imbues both intercorporeal gesture and threat with greater weight.

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[220] For an example of such an approach, *see* Kathleen Lundeen, "Who Has the Right to Feel? The Ethics of Literary Empathy," in *Mapping the Ethical Turn: A Reader in Ethics, Culture, and Literary Theory*, ed. Todd F. Davis and Kenneth Womack (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 83–93.
[221] On this point I follow Joshua Landy's call for employing questions of affect in order to break with the reductive logic cited above. *See* Joshua Landy, "The Dangers of Empathy," in *After Empathy?* (Modern Language Association (MLA) Annual Meeting., Austin, Texas, Saturday, January 9th).
[222] Michael L. Morgan, *The Cambridge Introduction to Emmanuel Levinas* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 3–4.
[223] Lévinas and Nemo, *Ethics and Infinity*, 80–81.

Although in *Bamboo*, Jose/'Isa conceives of his features as always misplaced,[224] he is first and foremost established as an unequivocally ethical subject; his physicality, irrespective of the burden of his phenotypical features, "becom[es] an ever more worldly sensitive interface, [...] present to the struggles of our time."[225] Jose's concern with how he affects and is affected by others is first established during an anecdote about his first confession, when he admitted the weighty sin of having once stolen the a chicken that had been prepared for Inang Choleng, the elderly woman who once lived on his grandfather's property. At first, Jose admits that he considered the frightening women among the "non-human creatures"[226] inhabiting the land. Narrating his indiscretion, he recalls the swings of his own physical state: salivating, nauseous, overtaken by hunger, and his adrenaline pumping, and nausea as he engages with himself in an ethical dialogue weighing his own physical state against the harm he may inflict upon the old woman, not to mention the shame and potential danger of getting caught. Biting his nails, Jose asks himself, "What if she dies of hunger?"[227] Although he ultimately did not consume the pilfered meal, since the incident, he has heard a buzzing (*ṭanīn*) in his head. The smiling priest assures him that prayer will resolve this physical symptom of guilt, yet Jose notes that the buzzing persisted for some time. This instance establishes his character, in both the literary and the ethical sense, as concerned, indeed, porous to, the physical states of others, as well as to the

[224] Alsanousi, *The Bamboo Stalk*, 4.
[225] Gregg and Seigworth, "An Inventory of Shimmers," 12.
[226] Here I modify Wright's translation; Write renders this as "creatures," but I translate the Arabic "makhlūqāt ghayr bashariyya" as "non-human creatures." pp. 51 in the English, pp. 67 in the Arabic. *See* Saʿūd al-Sanʿusī, *Sāq al-bambū*, 8th edition (Beirut: al-Dār al-ʿarabiyya lil-ʿulūm, 2013). Henceforth I will refer to citations from the English as al-Sanousi 2013, and from the Arabic as al-Sanousi 2015.
[227] Here I modify Wright's translation by retaining the word *ju'an,* of hunger in order to emphasize that Jose is weighing his own physical state against that of Inang Choleng; for while he is hungry now, she may die on account of his depriving her of food. (al-Sanousi 2015, 51; al-Sanousi 2013, 68).

physical manifestations, indeed, the affects of guilt. His character thus *invites* a Levinasian reading, a reading in which embracing responsibility for other "stop[s] the anonymous and senseless rumbling of being."[228]

Jose is further established as an ethical subject in his porousness to, respect for, and desirousness of the sights, sounds and spiritual insights offered by an array of religious and cultural traditions. Although he is not religious, he finds that "confusion and fear of the unknown possessed me [*tamallakanī*],"[229] (al-Sanousi 2012, 178; translation mine) impelling him to make his way directly from the embassy to the Manila Cathedral. Yet, sitting in the first pew, reciting the Lord's Prayer with his palm over his chest, over the cross his Aunt Aida had given him many years prior, does not sufficiently reassure him. He feels the need to take a two-hour trek through the city, towards the Buddhist Seng Guan Temple. Although he is not a Buddhist and does not know how to pray like one, he enters the shrine and approaches its Golden Buddha with ease (al-Sanousi 2015, 156). This ecumenism serves him well in Kuwait when he enters a mosque for the first time, feeling "lighter" than he ever has before, as if he is "almost flying" (al-Sanousi 2015, 240). In all three houses of prayer, he expresses he same humility before the unknown of his fate. Thus, in both the Philippines and Kuwait, he allows himself to enter into diverse, often foreign cultural spaces with curiosity, respect and awe, underscoring his constitution as an ethical subject in the Levinasian sense.

Jose's expansive farewell to the Philippines and ecumenical embrace of Kuwait underscores the sense of his possessing an ethical, relational subjectivity; yet, because his

[228] Lévinas and Nemo, *Ethics and Infinity*, 52.

[229] My translation emphasizes the extent to which these feelings seem to possess an agency via which they impinge upon Jose.

character does not at first consider his quality a virtue, his sense of his corporeality remains in question. Thus, like an adopted child, he constantly seeks to discern evidence of his providence from within his physicality. In this vein, he is particularly eager to approach a group of Kuwaiti tourists where he works at a hotel on the Filipino island of Borocay prior to his trip to Kuwait. His primary hope and goal in making their acquaintance is to test the wishful thinking of a filiality born of biological determinism, unearthing traces of his Kuwaitiness and holding them up to be claimed by knowledgeable and hospitable eyes. He approaches the five singing men, greets them in Arabic and seeks to confirm if they are indeed Kuwaiti as he suspects. When the young men are surprised and ask how he knows, Jose answer with a self-assured, "I know you (pl.) sir" (al-Sanousi 2012, 156, translation mine), suggesting not only that he knows that these five men are Kuwaiti, but also that he knows the entire country of Kuwait given his parentage. The men invite Jose to join them, and after an evening of song and drink, he confides in them that he is a Kuwaiti named Isa; when they don't believe him, he offers to convince them by dancing like a Kuwaiti. At first the men show an interest, and one of them even stands beside him, "shoulder to shoulder" (al-Sanousi 2015, 136), instructing him. For a brief moment, as the two shake their shoulders slowly, in unison, the Kuwaitiness of Jose's body is affirmed, but it isn't long before the illusory sense of recognition ends. The young men clearly understand that Jose may indeed hold Kuwaiti citizenship, yet they are sharply divided on whether or not that truly makes him Kuwaiti, and whether or not they should encourage him to return to Kuwait. Before the Kuwaiti men depart for their flight back to Kuwait, one of them gives Jose a large handful of cash, telling him, "Stay here, my friend, and drink Red Horse [...] The Red Horse there won't accept you. It'll crush you under its hoofs, my friend." (al-Sanousi

2015, 139) Although the others disagree, their collective ambivalence has been revealed: while the men were willing to invite Jose to join them on their vacation, the notion of inviting him back to their country evokes uncertainty. They were willing to indulge his fantasies of identification, dancing alongside him in a familiar, Kuwaiti fashion, but fear that his physicality would not hold up to a similar test before less hospitable eyes. Indeed, a similar test awaits him in Kuwaiti customs, where there is one set of lines for Kuwaiti and other Arab Gulf nationals, and another set of line for foreigners. The setup of the hall, like any customs hall in any airport in the world, underscores the binary division between citizens and non-citizens; by this necessarily reductive logic, Jose of course belongs in the line for Kuwaitis. When Jose attempts to cross over to a line for Kuwaiti citizens, he is redirected a number of times, first by a rude Kuwaiti clerk and then by a helpful Filipino until he enters a line for foreigners administered by a patient and welcoming officer. This second officer apologizes for his rude colleague and insists that Jose return to the first officer in order to enter his home country through the gate for Kuwaiti nationals. When he does return to the first line, he finds the officer enraged, stamping Jose's passport without looking at his face. As Jose passes through the gate, the kind officer gives him a "wink and a thumbs-up sign" (al-Sanousi 2015, 160). Between these two officers, the one who assists and winks, versus the one who will not look Jose in the face, lies the ambivalence of the Levinasian dictate: "The face is what one cannot kill, or at least it is that whose *meaning* consists in saying: 'thou shalt not kill."[230] Wherever he goes in Kuwait, his heart is open to all, yet his face is met with ambivalence.

[230] Lévinas and Nemo, *Ethics and Infinity*, 87.

If Jose is crafted as possessing an ethical subjectivity within a corporeality that inspires ambivalence in those around him, *Boreg*'s Michal and Nadine function as oddly devoid of both feeling and of memory; their corporealities, on the other hand, ironically serve as productive, sticky sites of collective, multidirectional memory. Michael Rothberg defines multidirectional memory as "interaction of different historical memories [effecting a] productive, intercultural dynamic."[231] While both women have difficulty remembering the specifics of their own day-to-day lives, in their stoic disconnect from those around them, they both ultimately become potent sites of memory for broader narratives. Examples of this include, Michal-as-Nadine, post-switch, coming to employ Zionist folk music to mark her decision to become a Palestinian suicide bomber, or Nadine-as-Michal, post-switch, enacting the Palestinian right of return not with a weapon, but with a pregnancy test via which she adheres herself in the Zionist injunction for women to procreate for the sake of the nation.[232]

Memory for the women is thematized by the eponymous *boreg*, the hardware screw. It begins when Michal, in the midst of her amnesia, finds that there is a screw missing from the package of replacement *Etaca* bed she has ordered. She excuses herself from an interview with a German film crew that has mysteriously shown up at her door and set up camp in her living room in order to take leave to a side room. Having just learned from the crew that her name is Michal Kayyam and that she is a famous artist, she ponders the

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[231] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 3.

[232] Andrea Siegel, "Rape and the 'Arab Question' in L.A. Arieli's Allah Karim! And Aharon Reuveni's Devastation," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues*, no. 23 (2012): 110–28; Sachlav Stoler-Liss, "'Mothers Birth the Nation': The Social Construction of Zionist Motherhood in Wartime in Israeli Parents' Manuals," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues* 6, no. 1 (March 17, 2004): 104–18, doi:10.1353/nsh.2004.0012.

strange art on the walls as she calls *Etaca.* Her puzzled stare suggests that she does not fully believe the crew; all she can recall at this moment is the missing screw. She states the problem succinctly to the *Etaca* branch manager in what is perhaps the most famous line of the movie: "*Ḥaser li boreg*" (Boreg 12:30), "I am missing a screw," which in Hebrew has the same connotation as the English "having a screw loose." While she quickly clarifies that she is referring to having received only four out of five screws, the descriptive language nevertheless rings true; she is uncertain of her name, and feels herself in a foreign museum in her own studio. Nadine, on the other hand, while not suffering from the same amnesia as Michal, still struggles with memory. Although her job is to sort and bag the *bragim*, the screws, she redefines her relationship to them by pilfering what she can, filling her pockets in order to drop them along her path from the checkpoint to the *Etaca* factory each day, Hansel and Gretel style. When an avalanche of screws fall from her pockets in front of her boss, who has just taken Michal's call, she is summarily fired (Boreg 15:30). Yet, her reliance on external objects to facilitate internal processes nevertheless continues. Indeed, Nadine professes to "pick up what others drop, to remember what they forget" (31:47). Collecting odds and ends is how she acquires memory, yet she thus leaves open the possibility that she does so at the expense of her own personal memories.

To a certain extent, her act of remembering only the memories of others seems to serve as part of a larger ethos of protest via which Nadine walks a fine line between forgetfulness and indifference. She blankly explains the background of a potential suitor's mother by purporting to read the coffee grinds left in the mother's cup; however, the camera subsequently zooms in on the inside of the cup, empty and clean, appearing to have not been used at all. In a similarly stoic mien, she irons a shirt with an iron that is not

plugged in as she calmly but resolutely rejects the idea of traveling to Kuwait to live there with an aunt (Boreg 23:40). Indeed, although neither woman remembers much, multi-directional, multi-valenced signification nevertheless sticks to each; it is as if each of them functions as a placeholder, signifying presence, indeed multiple presences, as much as any absence.

Jose is thus established as possessing an ethical subjectivity, ensconced in a porous corporeality that stands ready to confront the "challenges of our time." Michal and Nadine, on the other hand, seemingly cut off from feeling and memory, evince a stoic, stand-alone sense of self, ironically born by corporealities upon which a plethora of significations stick in multidirectional fashion. All three characters thus serve to reconfigure lines of filiation in accordance with the hospitality they receive and are denied; their movement across and within boundaries of filiation implicates those around them in the ambivalences of an inescapable shared horizon of possibility. It is to this filiation that we now turn.

Filiation, Hospitality, and the Inescapable Shared Horizon

In both *Boreg* and *Bamboo*, the unanticipated imbrication of one character's genealogy in that of another makes of geneaology and filiation a central concern that is approached ambivalently in both works. In *Boreg*, Nadine and Michal both ultimately step into the role of mother to and protector of the other's children, whether temporarily adopted or yet to be born, on the other side of the Green Line; although the women comport themselves in stoically atomistic fashion, they nevertheless come to embody genealogies greater than themselves. In a similar vein, as McManus notes, in *Bamboo*, the "preoccupation with inheritance and DNA bespeaks [the novel's] normative vision of the

nation as a kinship union."[233] Kinship and filiation are central axes of both works, and in both works they stand to be disrupted.

As McManus's argues, *Bamboo* probes the limits of filiation within nation as non-familial kinship union whose members nevertheless share a horizon of possibility and pluralist existing. Similarly, in *Boreg*, while the two female protagonists don't seem particularly enmeshed in any social project beyond their own solitary subjectivities, they are nevertheless revealed as party to a pluralist existing and nation as kinship union in the very moment of their seeming departures. Both works thus provoke by suggesting an expansion of the boundaries of filiation and of the body; their respective provocations are in turn located in the mechanism via which the body will or will not be subjected to intercorporeal expansion and exchange. That mechanism is the providing and withholding of hospitality.

Following Levinas, Derrida describes intercorporeality in terms of the paradoxical relationship between host and hosted:

> "[T]he stranger, here the awaited guest, is not only someone to whom you say 'come,' but 'enter,' enter without waiting, make a pause in our home without waiting, hurry up and come in, 'come inside,' 'come within me,' not only toward me, but within me: occupy me, take place in me, which means, by the same token, also take my place, don't content yourself with coming to meet me or 'into my home. [...] [I]t's as *if* the master, *qua* master, were prisoner of his place and his power, of his ipseity, of his subjectivity (his subjectivity is hostage). So it is indeed the master, the one who invites, the inviting host, who becomes the hostage--and who really has always been. And the guest, the invited hostage, becomes the one who invites the one who invites, the master of the host. The guest (*hôte*) becomes the host (*hôte*) of the host (*hôte*). These substitutions make everyone into everyone else's hostage. Such are the laws of hospitality."[234]

[233] McManus, "Scale in the Balance," 234.

[234] Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, trans. Rachel Bowlby, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2000), 124–25.

Here, Derrida argues that the paradox of hospitality, like Levinas's face-to-face encounter, confounds the power dynamics, subject positions, and very corporealities ("come within me [...] take place in me") entailed thereof. There is also a performative aspect of this description that echoes the pre-verbal nature of Gallese's intersubjectivity, born of the mirror neuron mechanism, as well as Levinas the face-to-face encounter that is "prior to and irreducible to comprehension or thought."[235] Indeed, Derrida's invocation of the invitation to enter seems to tumble out of the mouth faster than the words via which it is uttered. Don't just enter, he says, but enter "without waiting;" don't just make a pause in our home, but do so "without waiting." The speed of the exchange, at least as limned by Derrida, seems irresistible, almost centripetal as it occurs at the speed of the synapse.

The notion of the host as the hostage looms large in the extra-literary landscape of the Kuwait of *Bamboo*, as well as of the Israel of *Boreg* and *Meduzot*. In both countries, guest workers, especially from the Philippines, are *invited* in order to fulfill crucial economic roles. Yet, given the nature of the economic interdependency, guest workers and their hosts almost become mutual hostages of one another, in the Derridean sense. Jose as a literary character is an aesthetic embodiment of this state of such a state of mutual hostage taking.

At every step, Jose's accession to the filiation he seeks is informed by the act of invitation, of hospitality, and infused with the promise and threat of the intercorporeal. Even though genetics decrees an inescapable shared horizon of phenotype, gestures, proclivities and even mortalities, somehow it is not enough to determine the matter. For even though Jose is a 1st degree relative of Rashid and shares as much of his DNA with his

[235] Morgan, *The Cambridge Introduction to Emmanuel Levinas*, 61.

father as does his Kuwaiti grandmother, Ghanima, and as does his Kuwaiti half-sister, Khawla,[236] in this case the relationship of filiation that Levinas suggests to be decreed by genetic paternity does not necessarily follow to a pluralist existence. Indeed, in some ways the immediacy of genetic filiation can inspire a *resistance* to any further construction of a pluralist existence as such. Here, in an intercorporeality that cannot be repudiated, lie the contours of deeply ambivalent intersubjectivity, as informed by Derrida's conception of the paradox of hospitality.

In *Bamboo*, Jose's character is crafted as possessing an ethical intersubjectivity whose corporeality evokes the paradox and the ambivalence of hospitality at every step; he is forever invited, forever implicated in the paradoxes of hospitality. Once he turns 18, Jose travels from the Philippines to Kuwait with the assistance of his late father's friend, Ghassan. It is Ghassan who carries out Rashid's wishes by inviting Jose to Kuwait; this is the initial invitation that seems to skirt the paradox only insofar as Ghassan, as a *bidūn*, has nothing to lose by embracing Jose, and insofar as Jose, with his well-to-do Kuwaiti family, is unlikely to require Ghassan's relatively modest hospitality for long.[237] Finally, Jose's grandmother, Ghanima, invites Jose to live on the Tarouf family property, albeit in a detached guesthouse in the back and only after extensive prodding from Jose's Kuwaiti

[236] First degree relatives, including parent-child relationships, share 50% of their DNA, or 3400 centiMorgans on average. Ironically, given new advances in gene sequencing suggesting that full siblings only share 2,400 centiMorgans on average, Jose may even be more closely related to his father, Rashid, male heir of the Tarouf line, than any of his Kuwaiti aunts, at least genetically speaking. *See* International Society of Genetic Genealogy, "Autosomal DNA Statistics - ISOGG Wiki," *Autosomal DNA Statistics*, May 13, 2017, https://isogg.org/wiki/Autosomal_DNA_statistics.

[237] Ghassan himself is a *Bidūn*, thus possessing fewer political rights than Kuwaiti citizen Jose. As he explains to Jose, he doesn't want to have children because the political status of *bidūn* is like having a "malignant gene [that] never misses," that is "passed on from one generation to the next without fail, destroying the hopes of those who carry it." (al-Sanousi 2015, 200)

half-sister, Khawla. This invitation, unlike Ghassan's, brings to bear the full weight of the paradoxes of hospitality and concomitant intercorporeal place-switching of host and guest.

Jose's presence in the family compound makes the family a hostage not only to their guest, but also to their fears of scandal, and their fears of potentially unwelcome self-revelation. Grandma Ghanima invites Jose to eat with the family, instead of with the servants, even if only to prevent the servants from developing too close a relationship with him. Yet, although she as the host has done he inviting, she ultimately becomes a hostage to the inescapable similarity between Jose's voice and his that of his late father:

> This was the first time I had spoken in the presence of Grandmother. Without looking at me, Grandmother opened her eyes wide [...] [She] grabbed the end of the shawl thrown carelessly around her neck and covered her face with it. She began to cry silently. Her body was shaking violently. [...] Khawla deliberately spoke to me so that I would answer her and Grandmother could hear Rashid's voice in my own voice. Grandmother picked up a glass of water to drink as she listened, but she didn't look towards me and she didn't understand what I was saying in English. She started into space, or maybe she was looking at the face of her only son in her imagination. [...] She shook her head sadly, with a bitter look on her face, and with her left hand she began to wipe away her tears. (al-Sanousi 2015, 219)

Hearing her late son Rashid's voice, albeit in a foreign language spoken by a foreign guest, evokes an extreme case of fear of what Derrida calls "xenotransplantation," or the fact that it is possible to "become virtually xenophobic in order to claim or protect one's own hospitality, the home that makes possible one's own hospitality.[238] Xenotransplantation is thus the switching of places with the *xenos*, with the foreigner; it can entail the switching of economic and political places, and/or, in this case, the intercorporeal switch of bodies. In hearing Rashid's voice from Jose's mouth, Ghanima is reminded of the kinship tie that links her, through her son, to the foreign guest who sits before her. She recognizes a part of her own corporeality in Jose, and thus sees both her son and herself in the body of the foreigner

[238] Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 53.

before her. She simultaneously recognizes that this foreigner will see himself in her and is afraid of seeing herself, quite literally, in the place of the foreigner. Here, the giving and taking of hospitality is doubly intercorporeal.[239]

By the double logic of a xenotransplantation that occurs within the realm of a foreigner who is also linked to the self via an unchosen, irresistible filial always-already-in-existence intercorporeality, every abuse that Jose's body suffers serves as a warning, both to his Kuwaiti family, both in the book and beyond its pages. For every abuse his body suffers becomes a potential abuse of the Kuwaiti, the host-turned-hostage. Jose pines after a group of Kuwaiti tourists he has helped across the gangplank to dry land as part of one of his jobs back in the Philippines, wishing that he could tell them his name is Isa, that he could somehow become one of them, and that they should wait for him. Instead, he accepts their generous tips, because he is in need and they have money to spare; he remains silent and composed as he sadly watches them disappear in their jeep. (al-Sanousi 2015, 130). Once he arrives in Kuwait, the exclusions and abuses are without end, above and beyond the living arrangement that places Jose closer to the servants than his relatives. He is invited to join the family for a long weekend on the beach so long as he remains indoors and out of sight in a separate guest house all day (al-Sanousi 2015, 216). He is robbed by a plainclothes man pretending to be a police officer. He is excluded from the family Eid celebration; in fact, his existence is kept a secret from his aunts' husbands (al-Sanousi 2015, 245-246); when he accidentally enters upon a family celebration, his aunts save face before their husbands by pretending he is a servant. Once Jose does decide to strike out on

[239] Another instance of Derrida's xentotransplantation occurs in Ghassan Kanafani's "Returning to Haifa," discussed in the introduction.

his own, he serves ill-mannered customers in a fast food restaurant job that Kuwaitis do not do (al-Sanousi 2015, 304-310), and then he is imprisoned when he shows up at a checkpoint without his papers (al-Sanousi 2015, 287-290). In all of these instances, Jose's body becomes a site of what Thomas Elsaesser, in the vein of Derrida's host-as-guest-as-host, refers to as double occupancy:[240] in Jose's body dwell both self and other, and here, too, self and other mutually interfere with one another, again, in the space of the same body. This double occupancy in turn makes of Jose's materiality a type of mirror and site of imagined and imaginable intercorporeality, where the host sees a distorted yet recognizable reflection of himself, suffering the depravations of the non-citizen, whether a guest worker non-citizen or *Bidūn* non-citizen. Jose is a challenging guest because whose presence arouses ambivalence. It is not only a matter of propriety and status; at issue is the potential for his his abused, rejected body to become a pathway for intercorporeal exchange, for seeing the self, in the wretched other, indeed, for *becoming* the other, not only in the present moment, but also in the potential "bastardization" of the family line and subsequent bastardization of future generations. These are the substance of the fear of xenotransplantation. The image of the Kuwaiti-as-Filipino thus serves as a synecdoche for the unanticipated and undesired, yet ultimately irresistible communicability/transferability of the affects of global economic migration and displacement.

Notably, there is one shared horizon of possibility, one space where the Levinasian pluralist existing expands rather than contracts, enfolds rather than excludes, exudes

[240] Thomas Elsaesser et al., "Politics, Multiculturalism and the Ethical Turn: The Cinema of Fatih Akin - by Thomas Elsaesser," in *Just Images: Ethics and the Cinematic*, ed. Boaz Hagin et al. (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 6.

certainty rather than ambivalence: the recurrent trope of Jose Rizal, the Filipino writer who helped inspired revolution against the Spanish. The section epigraphs quote Rizal in a way that "graft[s...] Filipino nationalism onto Kuwait."[241] Rizal is a favorite source of inspiration and dignity for Jose and his Filipina half-sister, Merla, alike, and it is one of the few topics which Jose can discuss with Khawla and feel himself knowledgeable. In a certain sense, the centrality of Rizal is a nod to the passed days of *iltizām* and of vigorous secular, leftist, socialist politics in the Arab world, indeed, in the Global South writ large. It is a nod to Kanafani and the writers of *iltizām*. Anti-imperial commitments serve as one of the strongest common denominators, where continuing the struggle secures and expands the home sphere of all, so all may retain their capacity to host in their sovereign homes. As Derrida notes, one must protect one's home in order to be able to continue providing hospitality.[242] While Jose Rizal is an inspiring historical figure, his invocation in the text in the context of a journey to Kuwait elides the contemporary privileges afforded Kuwaiti citizens, living in a society that is no longer fighting a struggle for independence or survival; its battles, instead, are to contain gossip and scandal. Jose Rizal and a nostalgia for leftist politics thus have the perhaps unintended but nevertheless problematic consequence of evoking the defense of homes near and far, with the operative word being *far*; in a world where everyone fights an independence battle in some far-flung corner of the globe, here is ample space for intertwined bodies to unravel and disperse.

Similarly, like Jose, for whom every step of his journey to and in Kuwait is predicated upon an invitation, the switch at the checkpoint that enables Nadine and Michal

[241] McManus, "Scale in the Balance," 234.
[242] Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 53.

to exchange places is also predicated upon an invitation. When a soldier at the checkpoint realizes that Michal, who at this point is detained alongside Nadine, is a famous artist who could potentially bring negative publicity, he instructs his subordinate to apologize to her and personally drive her home (Boreg 54:33). The subordinate, however, is unable to distinguish between the two women, given their equally distant, disembodied expressions. He chooses to invite Nadine, who at this point becomes Nadine-as-Michal, and proceeds to chaffeur her out of the checkpoint and back to her home on the Israeli side of the Green Line. Here, place becomes inseparable from the materiality of the body. Switching places is thus crafted as an intercorporeal exchange, modulating the materiality of each woman in order to create openings for ambivalent intersubjectivity; for while the two women evince a certain ambivalence, other characters are freighted with the weight of ethical implications of such intercorporeality-turned-filiation. Nadine falls into a light slumber in the back seat of the car as psychedelic background music plays (Boreg 57:22), signifying the coming into being of a new filiality, of the expansion of horizons of possibility. As they arrive on a neighborhood street on he Western, Jewish side of Jerusalem, Michal's computer repairman recognizes Nadine as Michal, bearing witness and providing a stamp of acceptance to the exchange of place that gestures towards the intercorporeal. Nadine is recognized immediately as Nadine-as-Michal; this is of course denied Jose. In the meantime, Michal makes her way, unseen, to take the place of Michal-as-Nadine. The two women are guests who, following Derrida, exchange places with their hosts, in turn becoming the host of their hosts.

Although their exchange is readily accepted, perhaps even overlooked by those around them, it also progresses ambivalently. This ambivalence stems from the women's

ambivalent demeanors, first and foremost, in stark contrast to Jose's intense affectability. Additionally, the exchange is ambivalent because it is never completely clear to what extent the women identify, indeed, experience the world around them, as self or as other; they are thus able, after the switch, to embody both self and other at the same time, making of each an extremely potent site of multidirectional memory. This occurs most evocatively Michal-as-Nadine records a video in preparation for a suicide bombing she is to carry out. As many critics have noted, given the type of artwork she produces, suicide and suicide bombing seem to suit Michal well.[243] But before considering the full scope of Michal-as-Nadine's suicide note, it is necessary to take a brief detour. For the suicide video is the first time that Michal-as-Nadine speaks in Arabic, the language of her host-as-guest-host.

The Ambivalence of Interlanguage

As Derrida notes, the host "imposes on him translation into [the host's] language, and that's the first act of violence. That is where the question of hospitality begins: must we ask the foreigner to understand us, to speak our language, in all the senses of this term, in all its possible extensions, before being able and so as to be able to welcome him into our country?"[244] For Derrida, it is a singular act of violence to demand that the foreigner fully master all linguistic, and perhaps also cultural aspects of the host's language in order to be welcomed into the host's country, kinship union and horizon of possibility. This is the linguistic aspect of the paradox of hospitality, indeed a catch-22 that establishes plausible deniability: insofar as the foreigner will not be able to master the language and culture

[243] Shira Geffen herself made this point in an interview. *See* Sharron, "Dancing Arabs and the Inability to Escape Reality."
[244] Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 15–17.

without first being allowed in, the foreigner's lack of language becomes a reason to place stipulations and limits on the invitations extended to him. Abdelfattah Kilitto takes an opposing view, arguing that the host's first act of violence is to *prevent* the foreigner from speaking the host's language, and to insist instead on speaking that of the guest, thus denying the foreigner entrance, both to the language and to the kinship union it embodies.[245] Read together, Derrida and Kilitto agree that language, whether of the host or the foreigner, can function alternately as a marker of inclusion and a tool of exclusion. Yet neither philosopher considers the dialectical process by which a foreign language and culture are *gradually* acquired. This gradual acquisition and the increasing proficiency to which it gives rise suggest an alternate view of hospitality writ large. Language acquisition is in some ways an apt synecdoche for hospitality insofar as it requires the generous, flexible, and patient linguistic input, indeed, the constant inviting, from teachers and native speakers. Teachers and native speakers can limit the amount and success of the acquisition of language and culture by withholding input, by forcing a student to speak in his native language when he would rather speak in the L2,[246] and/or purposefully speaking the L2 in way that is unintelligible to the learner.

In language pedagogy, *interlanguage* is defined as "the language produced by a second language learner."[247] It is a language in-between, sharing features of the speaker's native language (L1), the language being learned (L2), as well as generalizations the

[245] Abdelfattah Kilito, *Lan Tatakallam Lughatī*, al-Ṭabʻah 1 (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ṭalīʻah, 2002), 100–109.
[246] This is a term in language pedagogy used to refer to the language that a student is learning; this is in contrast to the L1, the student's native language.
[247] The term was first coined in 1972; *see* Lourdes Ortega, *Understanding Second Language Acquisition* (London: Hodder Education, 2008), 110, http://UTXA.eblib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=564558. This concise definition is from Tricia Hedge, *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom*, 5th edition, Oxford Handbooks for Language Teachers Series (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 418. Ibid., 418.

learner makes about the rules of the L2 that may or may not be based in either. It refers to syntax, vocabulary, cultural reference and pronunciation. It refers to the process of gaining increasing mastery over a second language; as the learner progresses, the interlanguage asymptotically approaches the L2 of native speakers. Yet, the notion of interlanguage also alludes to the possibility that the average language learner will never truly speak the L2 properly. Thus, to believe that a student's interlanguage can and will converge, eventually, amounts to a stance of an invitation always-in-progress; it is a never-ending act of inviting. Absent that belief in a student's potential, there is always a pretext to deny the possibility, indeed, the plausibility, of entering into what Levinas terms the pluralist existence born of filiation. And in both *Bamboo* and *Boreg*, the ignorance and subsequent acquisition of a foreign language and culture, however imperfect, plays a pivotal role in mediating the possibilities of filiation and limits of intercorporeality. In *Boreg*, the centrality of translation and the limits of Michal and Nadine's language acquisition signal the limits of self-as-other, as well of self-as-other-as-self. In a similar although distinct vein, Jose/'Isa's unfulfilled desire to master Arabic and his need to tell his story through a translator signal the limits of filiation in *Bamboo*. Speaking the language of the other opens certain possibilities, yet always ambivalently.

In *Boreg*, both women are shown from the outset to have no knowledge of the language of the *other*; for both, such linguistic knowledge is gained, instantaneously, preternaturally and incompletely in the moment of their intercorporeal shift, of Nadine being invited to enter the space of Michal, and of Michal being invited to enter the space of Nadine. Their attempts at speaking the language and operating in the culture of the other,

however limited, can be read as gestures towards filiation, further underscored in way each embraces the role of mother on the opposite side of the Green Line.

Although Michal suddenly speaks Arabic once she has exchanged places to become Michal-as-Nadine, her *not* knowing Arabic is established early on in her existence as Michal. In a preview of a future possibility-in-waiting, Michal opens the door to a young Palestinian boy who has brought her a bouquet. Although the camera pans around to give a 360-degree view of the boy, his face remains obscured by the flowers. When asked who sent the flowers, he answers in the Palestinian Arabic, "*ba'arifish*" (Geffen 5:10), that he doesn't know. While this encounter suggests that she doesn't know Arabic, it also suggests that she has some type of strange relationship, either with flowers, with children, with Arabic, or with all three. Thus, first suggested in this early encounter with the flower-bearing Palestinian child, and definitively established when the translator with the German film crew, sensing Michal's exhaustion, offers to continue the interview in Arabic (Boreg 18:00), Michal is revealed as completely ignorant of Arabic. Echoing the appearance of the Palestinian boy with the flowers, it is as if the crew knows that Michal possesses some type of filiality with the Arabic language that she has forgotten; Michal, however, denies any knowledge of the language, and the interview adjourns until a later point in time, when, ironically, it reconvenes with the Arabic-speaking Nadine-as-Michal.

Echoing Michal's lack of knowledge of Arabic, it is similarly established in the film, albeit more painfully, that Nadine neither speaks nor understands Hebrew. At first, Nadine's knowledge of Hebrew is ambiguous. In a telling scene (Boreg 22:50-27:23), Nadine's bag of screws arouses the suspicion of Mika, one of the soldiers manning the checkpoint through which Nadine must pass to get to work. Mika detains Nadine, bringing

her to a small, grey inspection room. The camera angle is perpendicular to the two women, capturing the physical posture and expression of each as she faces the other. Given the tight quarters of the space, the camera is able to zoom in on the two women while still keeping the walls within the cinematic frame. Mika callously speaks on her cell phone as Nadine disrobes, obliviously chatting about plans for her upcoming 20th birthday. The obvious power dynamic is multiplied in the contrast between the women's bodies; Mika is armored up, wearing an army uniform and a semi-automatic weapon, while Nadine is exposed, wearing only undergarments. However, another, more acute and urgent layer of the power dynamic soon reveals itself: Mika speaks of her mother and the role her mother will play in her birthday celebration. The viewer, however, has already learned in a previous scene that Nadine's mother has passed away and that her father is in jail, leaving Nadine to the good will of family and friends (Boreg 22:13). It is as if the inequality in armaments in this small room speaks not only to a political inequality, but also to the far more painful and immediate inequality of one woman's mother being alive, and the other's being dead. Here, an opportunity for empathy is missed. Nadine explains in Arabic that she collects screws so that she can find her way home, but instead of an invitation, she is met with disinterest predicated on the rejection of any shared horizon of possibility. Mika explains that she, like Michal, does not understand Arabic.

At this point, Nadine's relationship with Hebrew remains ambiguous: is she consciously choosing not to speak it? It is only later, in another scene at the checkpoint, in the moments prior to Michal's arrival on the scene, that it becomes clear that Nadine does not understand Hebrew. Her brother is shot with a rubber bullet and Nadine begins to cry uncontrollably. Mika, still posted at this same checkpoint, takes her to a small holding pen

that appears to be designed to hold dumpsters. Kneeling in front of Nadine with her hands on Nadine's shoulders, Mika tries to explain to her that the bullets were rubber, that they were designed to cause pain but not to kill; they are an Israeli patent, and Nadine's brother will live (Boreg 52:44). Nadine's face registers no reaction to Mika's entreaties; just as Nadine's benign intentions were masked by linguistic difference in the inspection room, now the benevolence of the Israeli military industrial complex is rendered similarly unintelligible.

It is against the backdrop of Nadine-as-Michal suddenly speaking Hebrew, having resumed the interview with the German film crew, that Michal's suicide video appears. The interviewer turns on a video, ostensibly of one of Nadine-as-Michal's latest video installations. In the exhibit, which doubles as a lens into Michal-as-Nadine in the West Bank, Michal stares straight into the camera as an older woman outfits her with an explosive vest designed to look like a pregnancy bump. When asked what she wishes to say, Michal-as-Nadine begins to sing.

The song she chooses evokes nationalist longing and resistance activity as multidirectional memories: it is an Arabic translation of the Zionist song, "*Omrim Yeshna Eretz*," or "They Say There is a Land," (Boreg 67:26), written by Shaul Tchernichovsky in 1923. The song expresses the messianic anticipation and tired exasperation of the Jews wandering for forty years in the desert before entering the Holy Land, a land "drenched with sunshine."[248] The melody as Michal-as-Nadine sings it would be instantly recognizable to any Israeli viewer, thus rendering its Arabic version, sung by an Israeli-turned-

[248] For the lyrics, *see* "OMRIM YESHNA ERETZ," accessed July 28, 2017, http://hebrewsongs.com/?song=omrimyeshnaeretz.

Palestinian as preparation for an impending suicide attack, all the more subversive and defamiliarizing. The translation of *Omrim Yeshna Erez* into Arabic thus suggests the possibility that the core nationalist tenet of Zionist yearning for the land is equally expressive of Palestinian nationalist aspirations. In other words, Zionism and Palestinian Nationalism may evince some form of mutual intelligibility, just as Michal-as-Nadine and Nadine-as-Michal gesture towards a form of intercorporeality made visible by the sudden acquisition of language.

In some ways, however, Michal's Arabic suggests not a language fully acquired, nor an intercorporeality fully achieved. Her pronunciation is clearly that of a student still learning the language; for example, she pronounces the *qāf* of *ṭarīq* (way or path) as a *kaf* and the *ḍaḍ* of *arḍ* (land) as a dāl. Moreoever, in the selection of a Hebrew song, however contextually apt it may be, Michal-as-Nadine slips back into Michal, translating not just a song, but Hebrew culture into Arabic. In this way, it is as if in this suicide video, Michal-as-Nadine is speaking not Arabic, but rather, Arabic-as-Hebrew, a form of *interlanguage*. In this way, Israelis are cast as bearers of Palestinian memory, and vice versa; once again, the hostage-taking is mutual.

In her trancelike journey from the checkpoint to her home in the Jewish neighborhood of Ein Karem in Jerusalem, Nadine-as-Michal also becomes a site of ambivalent multidirectional memory (Boreg 57:22). She is at once a woman returning home from any sort of quotidian task, and a Palestinian exercising the Palestinian Right of Return. When Nadine-as-Michal pulls the handle to the door out of her handbag (Boreg 59:06), it is at once the broken piece of hardware that Michal had stashed in her bag before leaving the house, and the key that her displaced family had been keeping safe since 1948.

When she removes a painting of a window from the wall to reveal an actual window with a beautiful view (60:14), she is at once taking a painting off of the wall, and reclaiming the view of the sea, also lost for many Palestinians in 1948. When she switches the size of the mug in the coffee machine from an 8-oz to a 2-oz cup, she is at once remembering something that had been forgotten in the morning, as well as reclaiming the stolen apartment as a culturally Arab space (Boreg 60:32). Most crucially, when Nadine-as-Michal detaches a pregnancy test from one of the art installations in the home, she comes to embrace motherhood; however, given the political stakes of motherhood in Israel/Palestine, this motherhood is oddly multidirectional in nature. On a videochat in Hebrew with the husband who had left for a business trip at the beginning of the film, Nadine-as-Michal announces that she is pregnant. For the first time, Michal, who in this case is actually Nadine-as-Michal, shows a more lighthearted side; for when the husband asks her about the biennale, ie. the biennale in which she had intended her extracted uterus-turned-handbag to be on display as a work of art, Nadine-as-Michal cleverly deflects the question, answering him in Hebrew: "*Shem yafeh, aval ani ḥoshevet she hu ben!*" - "It's a nice name, but I think it's a boy!" (Boreg 63:50). While her Hebrew is perfect, and she even manages to make the distant, workaholic husband laugh, she has clearly interacted with the space of the home in ways that evince Palestinian cultural memories of dispossession. Thus, Nadine-as-Michal speaks of her pregnancy, it is as if she is doing so in Hebrew-as-Arabic, making it ambivalent as to whether or not she would give birth to children counted as Arab or Jewish in the ongoing demographic war between the two groups.

Language is also crucial for Jose. He desperately wants to master his ties with Arabic do as to strengthen ties of filiation with his late father and with broader Kuwaiti culture

and society. Having inherited from his father the propensity to write is not enough for Jose; he insists on learning Arabic so as to actually read his late father's writings (al-Sanousi 2015, 248), in order to feel more deeply that the two share a horizon of possibility. He has a long way to go; when he arrives, he feels most at ease speaking Tagalog with the Taroufs' maid (al-Sanousi 2015, 189 and 211).

Jose's knowledge of Arabic is so limited that his relationship with the language is mostly aspirational. If anything, he evinces a form of interlanguage when, harrassed on the street, he reasons that the insult *ḥimār*, or donkey, is not sufficient on is own and would pack a much greater punch if part of a longer lexical chain. However, since he does not know any other insults in Arabic, he must suffice with adding one in Tagalog (al-Sanousi 2015, 282-283).

Given Jose's limited grasp of Arabic, he ultimately relies on a translator as an imperfect transmitter, recognizing translation as a paradigmatic fault line that necessarily contracts pluralist existing. He chooses his friend, Ibrahim Salam, a Filipino Muslim working in Kuwait as a translator at the Filipino embassy. Ibrahim is also an enthusiastic religious educator; in Jose's opinion, too enthusiastic. While Jose revels in the shared majesty of the sacred spaces of a range of faith traditions, Ibrahim offers Jose what he finds to be dogmatism and feeble proofs (al-Sanousi 269-271).

However, Ibrahim is not alone is translating Jose's memoir of his time in Kuwait; Khawla edits the final Arabic text. All three provide annotation, albeit for different topics. Ibrahim glosses anything relevant to the Islamic textual tradition or to Filipino folk tradition, while Jose provides additional context from Filipino history. Khalwa, on the other hand, provides context for Kuwaiti customs about which Jose writes but which neither Jose

nor Ibrahim seem sufficiently to understand in order to render them in readily recognizable language in Arabic. She provides the name for *zaghārīd*, or ululations, for what Jose and Ibrahim render onomatopoeically as *kululush*, as well as the term *ghabqa* for what Jose vaguely describes as a middle of the night meal on Ramadan (al-Sanousi 2012, 264 n. 29). There are many ways to interpret the way in which writer, translator and editor shared in the task of annotating.[249] One possibility is that Khawla is not annotating for a Kuwaiti audience, but rather, for Jose and Ibrahim. She is offering to teach them both a little more about Kuwaiti customs, and in so doing, she is attempting to embody the role of teacher and of generous host, making a conscious choice to assist both her half-brother and his friend to further enrich their interlanguage, to continue moving towards a shared horizon of possibility, albeit ambivalently.

Conclusion

In this chapter, a comparative analysis of Saʻūd al-Sanʻusi's *The Bamboo Stalk* and Shira Geffen's *Boreg* has traced the contours of an ambivalent intersubjectivity that embodies both the hopes and anxieties born of the unforeseen and potentially undesired disruption of the body as it is situated in preexisting networks of filiation and cultural memory. Jose, Michal and Nadine are all established as ethical subjects embodied in porous corporealities; this porousness renders them capable of crossing boundaries of feeling and sentiment that others would not broach. In the case of Nadine and Michal, their marked

[249] Jonathan Wright's translation, incidentally, does away with the annotations altogether, at times condensing and integrating them into the body of the text, and at other times leaving them out all together. His translation further does away with translation as a framing device, dispensing with Ibrahim Salam's "translator's introduction."

disconnection from feeling with others, and from feeling at all, renders their bodies strangely non-emotive and yet nevertheless powerful sites to which multidirectional memories seem to stick with ease.

The concepts of filiation and hospitality further articulate the nature of the ambivalent openings for intersubjectivity made possible in each work. Jose, the son of an invited guest worker and her host/boss, is in turn invited back to claim is invited back to Kuwait on account of his late father's wishes. Yet, upon his arrival, an in line with Derrida's notion of the paradox of hospitality, he and his Kuwaiti family become hostages of one another, displeased with the shared horizon of possibility that lays before them yet unable to escape its ethical demands. Thus, part of what makes of Jose a site of ambivalent intersubjectivity is that the family can both recall in his gestures his late father whom they all miss dearly, yet at the same time they understand him to be a corrupting influence on their line and their family reputation for generations to come. They thus fear *xenotransplantation*, or switching places with the foreigner. In the case of Nadine and Michal's invitation to switch at the checkpoint, on the other hand, xenotransplantation is not a fear, but rather, an unremarkable reality, a fait accompli that no one seems to notice.

Furthermore, in both works interlanguage serves as an important device for creating ambivalent spaces of multidirectional memory. Michal-as-Nadine sings a Zionist song in preparation for a suicide bomb attack. Nadine-as-Michal exercises her Right of Return by rearranging Michal's apartment and ambivalently entering into an uncomfortably ambivalent bloodline. Jose tells his story through a translated, heavily annotated text. In all three cases, the incomplete acquisition of a foreign language and/or

culture lays bare the fault lines that remain when cultural memory from different groups accumulate within the same object or body.

Lastly, in a certain way these two works resist more traditional expressions of the affects of empathy in their respective linguistic spheres. In the case of *Boreg*, giving voice to the Palestinian narrative of dispossession seems to almost render the film as a work of *commitment*, or *iltizām.* Conversely, *Bamboo* introduces a Kuwaiti-Filipino with legitimate and undeniable claims upon Kuwait only to send him away in the end; in this way, the novel almost seems to evoke the ethic of crying and shooting (*yorim ve-bochim*).

Conclusion

This dissertation has traced the contours of three different textures of intersubjectivity in Modern Arabic and Hebrew literatures and cinema: frightful, chastened and ambivalent. Each of these three textures underscores different aspects of the uncertainty and precariousness of the phenomenology of existence in the present historical moment, roughly speaking, amidst accelerating political, economic and social change.

Frightful intersubjectivity exists on the precipice of the breakdown of the human. While Ḥanān al-Shaykh's *Story of Zahra* crafts a productive empathy that ultimately finds agency in self-sacrifice, Hūdā Barakāt's *Disciples of Passion* posits feminine feeling-with-others, especially in its excess and/or perversion, as destructive force. Intersubjectivity in this chapter is thus textured as frightful insofar as it is emblematic of the abandonments and perversions possible in an atomized world overtaken by cruelty and devoid of compassion. In this world, the ability to feel with others either languishes, or worse, its misuse helps accelerate the breakdown of the human. Despite their differences, both texts produce a deep yet strategic unsettling that crafts forms of intersubjectivity textured by frighfulness; it is simultaneously the mirror held up to a society in the throes of breakdown amidst grueling and heinous conflict, and the hope that the reflection will be shocking.

Alternatively, chastened intersubjectivity belongs to the domain of Benjamin's Angel of History, standing before the march of progress as it barrels over the very porousness required for the long-term sustainability of humanity in balance with itself and with nature. Both Ibrāhīm al-Kūnī's *The Bleeding of the Stone* and Yoel Hoffmann's *The Book of Joseph* both craft such a chastened intersubjectivity, whereby affectively porous protagonists feel

with and for that which is beyond the self, whether embodied in the bodies of ethnolinguistic others, or in the expanses of the natural and supernatural worlds. Yet, somehow these porous protagonists evince a chastened awareness of the limits of their porousness to forestall the disaster implicit in contemporary modes of consumption and racially inflected inclusion/exclusion. The affectively porous protagonists are ultimately destroyed, indeed, shattered, by the affectively impervious. In a certain sense, this comparison performs a reading across peripheries that breaks down the binary ascription of reason to Europe, and nonreason to colonized or formerly colonized lands. Yet, in another sense, in the very act of experiencing the world in a focused, intersubjective, albeit chastened fashion, the affectively porous protagonists in these texts outshine their geographical, ethnic, and socioeconomic positionality to destabilize the very notion of center or self.

Lastly, the texture of ambivalent intersubjectivity embodies the hopes and anxieties born of unforeseen and potentially undesired of intergenerational body and/or multidirectional memory. Saʿūd al-Sanʿusi's *The Bamboo Stalk* and Shira Geffen's *Self Made* both invoke aspects of intercorporeality and interlanguage in order to trace the possibilities and limits of an intersubjectivity experienced under such ambivalent terms. In both texts, acts of hospitality quickly reveal hospitality's paradox in Levinasian terms: the host and guest ultimately switch places, coming to see the self in the other whether they like it or not, and ultimately becoming one another's hostages as they become imbricated in shared horizons of possibility that uncomfortably challenge their sense of self, family and cultural memory. Uncomfortable or not, the guest-turned-host-turned-guest requires an ethical response.

These three textures of intersubjectivity -- frightened, chastened and ambivalent, fail to conform to the aforementioned schematic of *shooting and crying,* on the one hand, and commitment, on the other. Indeed, in a way, they all stage a certain rebellion against such proscribed forms of feeling for and with the political body.

Simultaneously, they are offered as a type of reading of empathic affect intended to move the field of Empathy Studies beyond the binaries of pro- and anti-empathy. In so doing, this analysis in turn has aimed to suggest a comparative reading practice of Hebrew and Arabic predicated upon the notion of a divergent yet intertwined cultural history of empathy, shaped in large part by the Question of Palestine. In this way, the Hebrew-language aesthetic of crying and shooting (*yorim ve-bochim*) is conceived as party to a larger, global body of work considered paradigmatic in their respective linguistic spheres as embodying the hero that exculpates the group. Alternatively, some Arabic-language texts seen as espousing commitment (*iltizām*) are conceived as party to a larger, global body of work that reveals the empathy of the privileged as a tool for effacing injustice and inequalities of power. This is of course a simplification, but nevertheless a useful one. For by extending these general categories into Hebrew and Arabic, the empathic correspondences between Anglophone and Middle Eastern literatures are rendered visible and thus enable interpretation that reads dialectically, both with and beyond the Conflict and with and beyond the binaries of empathy.

In so doing, this work has offered an interpretive language for articulating the literary and cinematic crafting of the intersubjective in an era when the very possibility of intersubjectivity has been put into question. This is a language that, rather than fight for or against empathy, rationality, breakdown, or, be as it may, hope, instead attempts to dwell in

the very tensions present in the modern experience of the breakdown of traditional forms of religious belief, community and family and the emergence of an extreme ipseity that may or may not be conducive to the cultivation of the Aristotelian virtues. By developing this language via comparative readings of Hebrew and Arabic, it suggests that similarities in the affects of empathy may arise, even despite divergent, indeed, oppositional literary histories of emotion. They are some of the textures of modern subjectivity, affectively empathizing with others who according to debates in philosophy, theory, and popular culture, may or may not exist, may or may not matter, and may or may not be the very aspect of modern selfhood that has been missing all along.

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